

(REFER TO HERITAGE Vic  
REF No H 953)

H083 MAP 3

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VICTORIA)

CLASSIFICATION REPORT

WYALLA

1. NAME OF PLACE

Wyalla.

2. OTHER NAME

Thanes.

3. LOCATION

13A Monaro Road, Malvern.

4. DATE

c1908.

5. TYPE OF PLACE

Residence.

6. EXTENT OF DESIGNATION

Entire property.

7. LISTING DETAILS

Classified at National level.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed by Butler & Bradshaw in 1908 for mining engineer Franz Wallach, Wyalla is of national significance. Also known as Thanes, it is a picturesque example of the Arts and Crafts Freestyle, inspired by the Elizabethan period and popularised in turn of the century England by architects such as R.N. Shaw and W. Lethaby. It is one of the most distinctive examples of Arts and Crafts architecture in Melbourne and there are no known buildings bearing close comparison in Victoria. It is of particular note for its internal planning and detailing which are representative of Arts & Crafts concepts and expressive of progressive contemporary Australian design. Wyalla's significance is further enhanced by the integrity of the original design and finishes (apart from the loss of the kitchen wing) and the special character provided by the internal decor and contents as well as the remaining garden layout and mature trees.

Wyalla's significance is heightened by its association with Walter Butler who is recognized as one of the most influential and successful domestic architects in Victoria at this time. His early experience with leading Arts and Crafts architects in England provides a distinct link with the

international Arts and Crafts movement, and his continuing interest in English architecture is clearly demonstrated by this building.

## 9. HISTORY

Wyalla was constructed by Mossop & Pichersgill, builders to the design of Walter Butler of Butler and Bradshaw, Architects for mining engineer (1), Franz Wallach. Wallach's occupancy was apparently terminated at the outbreak of World War 1 when he was interned as an enemy alien. The building was then let for a short period before ownership was transferred to Mrs Wallach. Another tenant occupied it in 1917 and the building was purchased by Mrs Moore in 1919. The building again changed hands in 1927 (2) and was either purchased directly by Leonard Righetti or by L A Highett who leased it to Righetti before his subsequent purchase. Leonard Righetti was the Mayor of Malvern and related to the Italian settlers of the Daylesford area. The property was purchased by Richard Minifie, prominent flour miller circa 1940. This appears to have been when the house was renamed Thanes. The first alterations appeared to be the construction of a large two storey verandah extending the full width of the angled north-east wing, apparently for Righetti's occupancy in conjunction with other works involving MMBW approval in 1929 (3). The demolition of the single storey kitchen wing would be likely to have been in 1963 when further MMBW approval was obtained. The kitchen was a slate hipped roof addition dominated by a massive chimney stack extending to the height of the southern gable with a small parapeted section echoing the parapeted deck over the drive-way entry (4).

The subdivision of the land took place over an extended period. By 1947 (5) No 13 Monaro Road had been subdivided off to change the property address to 13A and possibly a rear facing allotment to Avenel Road was already sold. Several allotments to the south also formed part of the original allotment which was bounded by Avenel Road and the railway (6). The tennis court at the rear was moved to the side garden in the 1930s after originally being located on the site of No 13 Monaro Road to the north of the house (7). Recent further subdivisions have seen the alienation of two further allotments at the rear leaving only one allotment which once formed part of the relocated tennis court as part of the current property.

### Summary of Owners and Occupiers

#### Owners

- 1907-8 - Wallach, Franz, Australian Metal Company, land only.
- 1908-9 - Wallach, brick house and land £200 net annual value.
- 1914-15 - Wallach, owner Leonard, Clive, occupier; during year Mrs Wallach becomes owner and occupier - brick house 16 rooms.
- 1919-20 - Moore, Mrs Ilse, house known as Wyalla
- 1928-29 - Righetti, Mrs E. R., owner and occupier

(Source - Malvern Rate Books)

Occupiers

1908 - Wallach, Franz

1914 - Leonard, Clive

1917 - Tilley, William

1919 - Moore, Mrs Ilse

1928 - Righetti, Leonard

1942 - Minifie, Richard P

(Source - Sands & McDougall Directories)

Buildings Works References

The residence of F Wallach Esq., Monaro Road, Kooyong,  
Architect Messrs Butler & Bradshaw, 413 Collins Street,  
Builders Mossop & Pichersgill

(Table Talk 13 December 1908 - qd Architects Index)

1908 - Owner Mr F Wallach, 113 William Street, Melbourne,  
agent Butler & Bradshaw, 413 Collins Street, Melbourne

1929 - Owner, L. A. Highett

1963 - Owner, R P Minifie, agent S P Dowling, 16 Toorak Road  
South Yarra

(Source - MMBW House Cover Plans)

10. DESCRIPTION

10.1 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The house has a unique, picturesque architectural character which is enhanced by the overall intactness of the property and the mature trees in the garden. It was originally sited on a large block extending through to Avenel Road, the land falling to the rear with commanding views to the north-east over the Tooronga Valley. The house is planned so that the principal living areas face down this north-east slope across a projecting terrace, while the large entry and stair hall face the hard standing area of the entry drive to the south-west. The house has an Arts and Crafts plan that was unusual for Melbourne at this period. The characteristics are the absence of a central passage; the living areas facing a sunny aspect and a large passage and stair hall with the opposite, more sunless orientation. Another Arts & Crafts characteristic is the angling of the footprint of the building, for example, as typified by architects such as Prior and Gimson. This plan form was also used for Walter Butler's architectural landmarks, Warrawee in Orrong Road, and Grong Grong in Toorak Road, now both demolished. Wyalla was designed with the main two storey section forming both wings of the angled plan with a single storey kitchen wing providing an extension of the north-south wing, although this is now demolished.

Externally the building is of principal note for the Elizabethan parapets to the six main gables as well as the swagged parapets to the various projections over the bay windows and entry porch. The chimney stacks and terracotta chimney pots further add to the dramatic roof line of this building. At the rear parapeted bays also thrust out from the

building, in a baronial manner like Norman Shaw's Netherall Gardens house or Redcourt by William Lethaby; the bay windows feature a decorative timber blind hood. The windows generally are of casement design with simple leaded glazing of a rectangular pattern. On the stairwell these are stepped to express the rising flight of stairs and are stacked vertically creating a grid pattern which has references to the work of Lutyens. The house is entered through a large arched entry featuring a wreath of gum leaves and nuts, this is repeated by a second entrance of a matching design on the axis of the main hall.

The building has a slate roof and the walls are finished in rough cast of a warm ochre colour which distinguishes it from most of the more common grey rough cast buildings of a later period. The sweeping curves of the Elizabethan gables have smooth rendered cappings. Similarly the garlands over the arched entries are also smooth rendered as are the cappings to the chimneys. By contrast the terrace is constructed of face red brick work with a vertical slot to create a simplified balustrade. The remnant section of the two-storey sleep-out balcony is finished in a matching material but is now glazed on the end wall. It is an interesting curiosity which adds to the rich character of the house but detracts from the building design. The balance of the verandah structure remains without a roof or floor to create a pergola outside the lounge room.

While the kitchen wing has been demolished and the end wall re-rendered to match, the footings remain as does a single storey outhouse currently serving as a wash house and servants toilet. A derelict garage was constructed abutting this apparently as part of the 1920 work. A garden shed finished in the same rendered finish is located on the rear allotment facing Avenel Road adjacent to the site of the relocated tennis court. A modern carport provides a slightly discordant note to the hard standing area. The front fence is a simple jarrah planked design which until very recently retained a tapered end post indicating an elegant character that would appear to be associated with the original design of the building.

The main hall is entered by a small vestibule from the main entry or a flyscreen enclosed porch leading onto the terrace. The hall has a large fireplace and an impressive stairway rising on the side wall in front of a set of leaded glass windows. The balustrading comprises a timber screen of the main columns and slender vertical rods extending to the ceiling of the ground floor all in rich timber as are the doors and ceiling beams. At the upper level, the columns continue to the ceiling with steeply angled curved brackets. The angled plan creates an angled termination to this major space. The three living areas on the north-east wing each have an angled bay window as well as French doors opening onto the wide terrace; they are interconnected with double doors. They include a sitting room, a lounge and what is now the dining room. The lounge room has a double height ceiling; it is lowered on the section nearer the hall to create an

inglenook character to the fireplace. While the timber in this room has been painted in the 1930s, it is otherwise intact and is also of note for the leaf design on the plaster strap worked ceiling (also used in the sitting room) which echoes the leaf garland of the entry arches. The current dining room marks the transitional angle of the plan and the bay window at the corner is located in such a manner as to disguise the unusual geometry of the plan form. The angled section of the north-south wing is used to form a deep inglenook for the fireplace. A pair of double doors enter the current kitchen area, which was the original dining room with an inglenook matching that of the current dining room.

The basic plan form is echoed on the first floor with the main bedroom above the lounge room, the secondary bedroom above the former dining room and a dressing room above the sitting room. This features a number of built in fitted wardrobes featuring Arts and Crafts detailing and polished timber. It opens onto the remnant section of the balcony which served as a sleep-out. The bathroom and WC adjacent appear to retain their original tiles and some fittings as does the second bathroom on the north-south wing. There are three other smaller bedrooms on the top floor, two of which appear to be designed for maids.

#### 10.2 PRESENT USE

The building is currently used as the Minifie family home and is on the market for sale.

#### 10.3 PRESENT CONDITION

The house generally is extremely intact including finishes, part from the later verandah, the removal of the kitchen wing and some redecoration of the 1920s and 30s including painting of joinery and panelling in some rooms; it is enhanced by the rugs, furniture and drapes, many of which appear to date from this period.

#### 11. REFERENCES

- (1) pers. comm. Mrs S. Scott daughter of F. Wallach.
- (2) pers. comm. Mrs Swanson daughter of L Righetti.  
(however, the indication of the MMBW plan indicates Highett as the owner in 1929).
- (3) The two tennis courts are shown in early photographs from collection of Mrs Swanson.
- (4) An impressive view of the front entry shows the kitchen wing *ibid*.
- (5) MMBW 160 to the inch plan No 58 1947 shows house one part of original allotment and footprint of other buildings existing at that period.
- (6) pers. comm. Mrs McKenzie, visitor to the house during Moore ownership.
- (7) The verandah is shown extending at both levels in a similar design to the remnant section of concrete piers and balustrade with Virginia creeper and canvas blinds to create sleep-outs at the upper level. Swanson photographs *op. cit*.

## 12. APPENDICES

1. Extant Buildings in Malvern Designed by Various of Butler's offices.
2. Details of Butler's Professional Career.
3. Extract from Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol 7, p 510.
4. Photocopied pictures of Wyalla taken during the 1930s.