

Locality: YARRAM
Place address: 135 COMMERCIAL ROAD
Citation date 2016
Place type (when built): Residence, doctor's surgery, trees
Recommended heritage protection: Local government level
Local Planning Scheme: Yes
Vic Heritage Register: No
Heritage Inventory (Archaeological): No

Place name: Ventnor house and former surgery, and Palms



Architectural Style: Federation and Inter War Arts and Crafts
Designer / Architect: Attributed to Harold Desbrowe-Annear (1912 section)
Construction Date: 1912, 1920

Statement of Significance

This statement of significance is based on the history, description and comparative analysis in this citation. The Criteria A-H is the Heritage Council Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance (HERCON). Level of Significance, Local, State, National, is in accordance with the level of Government legislation.

What is significant?

Ventnor house at 135 Commercial Road, Yarram, is significant. The form, materials and detailing as constructed in 1912 and c1920 are significant. The Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) are significant.

Outbuildings, and later alterations and additions to the building are not significant.

How is it significant?

Ventnor house is locally significant for its historical and aesthetic values to the Shire of Wellington.

Why is it significant?

Ventnor house **is historically significant at a local level** as it represents the development period of Yarram, following the release of private land for sale in the town, which became a commercial centre for the surrounding dairying and grazing district. Yarram was also the centre of local Government from 1897 to 1994, as the location of the Alberton Shire offices. Doctor John H. Rutter had Ventnor house and surgery built in 1912, before the Yarram Hospital opened in the town in 1914. Ventnor is known to have served as a surgery during John Rutter's ownership. The original 1912 single-storey section of the house is attributed to prominent Melbourne architect Harold Desbrowe-Anneer. While the two-storey section, built 1920, was designed and built by local builder Thomas W. Cheal. After Rutter's death in 1944, the surgery at Ventnor was run by his son-in-law between 1946 and 1948. The house remained in the Rutter family until 1962. It was purchased in recent times by the great grandson of Dr Rutter. Ventnor house is significant for its association with John H. Rutter, who was a prominent local doctor, serving the district for almost 40 years. He was one of the prime movers in the foundation of the Yarram Hospital, ran St Elmo's Private Hospital for a period, and was one of the district's most highly respected and popular citizens. (Criteria A & H)

Ventnor house **is aesthetically significant at a local level for its architectural qualities** reflecting the Arts and Crafts style. It is a fine and intact example of a Federation 1912 single-storey Arts and Crafts house, with an Interwar c1920 two-storey addition reflecting the same architectural style. The notable elements of the 1912 house are the four original chimneys and complex hip-and-gable roof with wide eaves and exposed rafter ends. The two prominent gabled ends of the two main elevations have lined eaves supported by decorative timber brackets, with arched timber louvered vents, and walls clad in scalloped shingles. Below the shingled gable end are rectangular box windows, with skillion roofs clad in shingles, geometric leadlight casement windows and splayed bases with finely detailed mitred corners. The exterior walls are clad with weatherboard to the lower half, and roughcast render to the top half. The entrance is beneath the gabled-bay of the south elevation, in a large recessed porch with a weatherboard-clad balustrade. Most of the windows are timber casement windows with geometric, elegant leadlight. The significant 1920 two-storey addition is sympathetic in style. It also has weatherboard cladding to the bottom half of the walls and roughcast render to the top half. The ground floor has a verandah and a very grand stone chimney that extends from the ground floor to the second storey on the south elevation. The second storey has panels of roughcast render with timber strapping, and shingles to the gabled-ends. The timber box windows to the addition are also clad with timber shingles. (Criterion E)

The five mature Canary Island Date Palms along the west and south boundaries contribute to the aesthetic significance of the place. (Criterion E)

Statutory Recommendations

This place is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wellington Shire Planning Scheme to the extent of the title boundary as shown on the map.

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	Yes, 5 Canary Island Date Palms
Outbuildings or fences which are not exempt under Clause 43.01-3	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	Not assessed

Map of recommended boundary for Heritage Overlay



KEY

- Recommended for Heritage Overlay
- Title boundary

Ventnor House

135 Commercial Rd, Yarram

Project: Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study
Client: Wellington Shire Council
Author: Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd
Date: 12/2/16

History

Locality history

The Tarra Creek pastoral run was taken up in the 1840s, in the area that now encompasses the Yarram township. In the early 1850s, John Carpenter built a flour mill and sawmill near the Tarra River, upon which a bridge was soon built. A small township began to develop on private land on the west side of the River, which was first named Barkly, after Victorian Governor Sir Henry Barkly. However, the small township soon became known as Yarram Yarram; the parish name. Yarram is an Aboriginal word though to mean 'plenty of water' or 'billabong'. The town would be called Yarram Yarram until 1924 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:79; YDHS website)

Yarram was part of the first Shire established in Gippsland – Alberton Shire established 1864 – where a District Road Board was formed in 1855 (Context 2005:38). In 1857, the first store was opened in the town of Yarram Yarram by Charles Devonshire. Soon other stores were established as the town grew, including a shanty on the site of the Yarram Hotel. The development was a result of the marketplace located in Yarram, which served local farmers who preferred the location over the more distant Port Albert (YDHS website). The first mechanics' institute was built in 1860 and a school opened in 1861. All communication during this period was via Port Albert to the south (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

Yarram's growth was constrained by the release of private land for sale. Development within the town gained momentum from the 1880s, with town allotments purchased from private landholders (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80). One such developer was James Nicol, who owned the land east of Commercial Road, between (just north of) Gipps Street and James Street. Nicol subdivided the land and sold town allotments from 1889. By the 1890s, Yarram had established itself as a commercial centre, servicing an extensive dairying and grazing district. The Yarram Butter Factory (1891) was a major component of the industry in this area of the Shire (Context 2005:12, 38). The township of Yarram Yarram was gazetted in 1893 and in 1897 the Alberton Shire offices were relocated to Yarram, establishing the southern town as a seat of Government (Context 2005:38; YDHS website).

From the early 1900s, large areas of land were selected in the Strzelecki Ranges to the north and west of Yarram for dairying, supplying cream to the butter factory. By 1903, Yarram Yarram also had a Shire hall, four churches, the Commercial and Yarram hotels, Masonic and Rechabite Lodges and a state school. At the centre of the pastoral district, Yarram remained the cattle market for southern Gippsland (*Australian handbook* 1903). The Yarram courthouse opened in 1908, the hospital was officially opened in 1914 and a higher elementary school was established in 1918. In 1921, the Great Southern railway Line from Melbourne reached Yarram (Context 2005:30, 41, 44). The Forests Commission established an office in Yarram in 1945 to manage the reforested lands in the region. From the 1950s, the Housing Commission and several housing co-operatives built many new homes in Yarram. However, the town was affected by the decline of rural industries in the 1970s. The milk factory and railway line closed in 1987 (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

In 1994, Wellington Shire was created by the amalgamation of the former Shires of Alberton, Avon and Maffra, the former City of Sale, most of the former Shire of Rosedale, as well as an area near Dargo which was formerly part of Bairnsdale Shire (Context 2005:39). The town continues to serve as an important regional centre. It is also the location of the regional headquarters for the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Fletcher & Kennett 2005:80).

Thematic context

This place is associated with the following themes from the *Wellington Shire Thematic History* (2005):

7. Building Settlements and Towns

- 7.2 Service Centres

8. Governing and Administering

- 8.6 Health and Medical Services

Place history

The major landholder at Yarram, James Nicol, sold the subdivided lot on the corner of Commercial Road and King Street (the current 135 Commercial Road) to John Hemphill Rutter, Medical Practitioner of Yarram Yarram, in July 1910. The lot to the north (the current 133 Commercial Road) was sold to Mary Dougherty and presumably acquired by Rutter soon after, prior to the construction of the existing house (LV:V3430/F889; V3430/F889). Both Dr and Mrs Rutter were doctors who arrived in Yarram in 1909 (YDHS).

Rutter called for tenders for the construction of the existing single storey section of the house on 21 February 1911 (CCR). The house 'Ventnor' was built for the Rutters in 1912 (YDHS). The highly accomplished design is clearly by a professionally trained architect (Figure H1). The Yarram and District Historical Society notes that the original portion of the house and surgery (the one-storey portion fronting Commercial Road) is believed to have been designed by prominent Melbourne architect Harold Desbrowe-Annear, who was a personal friend of Dr Rutter. Dr Rutter wanted a house that reflected the architecture of his family's origins – Ventnor on the Isle of Wight – and this is reportedly the reason for the unique style of the house (YDHS). Dr Rutter's great grandson (the current owner), James Fisher, states 'there are no notes of Desbrowe-Annear to speak of, but I know from my mother and grandfather that he did design the front part of the house. My great grandfather Dr Rutter was good friends with Desbrowe-Annear' (Fisher, pers. comm., May 2016). However, stylistic analysis of the architectural details of the house by academic Prof Harriet Edquist, indicates that it does not show any of Desbrowe-Annear's trademark architectural features or stylistic tendencies (Edquist). Although the attribution to Harold Desbrowe-Annear has not been confirmed by documentary evidence, there is no reason to doubt the validity of the family history on the matter. Further research to establish the connection between Rutter and Desbrowe-Annear may clarify the origins of the family oral history.

Internally, the house was built with fine cabinetry work in various timbers, including blackwood from Blackwarry. The blackwood was carted to the Alberton Railway Station to be sent to Melbourne to be made into furniture for the Rutter's house (YDHS). At least some of the internal woodwork remains (Fisher, pers. comm., May 2016). The rear portion of the house with the second storey was completed in 1920 to another design (Edquist; YDHS). Fisher notes that the rear section was designed and built by local builder Thomas W. Cheal (Fig H2) who also built another family house, 'Glengarry' in Port Albert (Fisher, pers. comm., May 2016).

The house also served as a surgery for Dr Rutter (YDHS). Dr Rutter and Dr Lindsay Craig took over St Elmo's Private Hospital in 1919, later solely run by Dr Rutter. St Elmo's was located opposite Ventnor to the south-east, on the corner of King and Nicol streets (YDHS).

An article in 1943 referred to Dr and Mrs J. H. Rutter of 'Ventnor, Yarram' (*Argus* 4 Mar 1943:6). Rutter remained the owner of the property until his death in 1944 (LV:V3430/F889). An article in *The Age* in 1944 (9 May 1944:3) stated that his sudden death occurred at his home in Yarram. The article reported that Dr Rutter had been in practice in Yarram for over 40 years, and was one of the best known residents of South Gippsland. He was one of the prime movers in the foundation of the Yarram Hospital. *The Argus* (10 May 1944:3) reported that Dr J. H. Rutter was one of the district's most highly respected and popular citizens, who was an active community member who also served as a naval surgeon. His funeral in 1944 was reportedly the largest ever held in the district, paying credence to the high regard he was held in, for his care and courage as a doctor (YDHS).

The house was under the ownership by Rutter's Trustees until 1962 when it was sold out of the Rutter family (LV:V3430/F889). Dr Rutter's son-in-law also ran the surgery at Ventnor between 1946 and 1948 (YDHS). The house was purchased in recent times by Dr Rutter's great grandson.

In 2015, the property retains five mature Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) along the boundaries, which were probably planted in the 1920s or 1930s (Hawker 2016).

Outbuildings that remain in 2015 include a double garage on the southern boundary which is accessed off King Street, and an early weatherboard outbuilding on the eastern boundary near Commercial Lane (Context 2005). The early weatherboard outbuilding has a number of new additions attached and is quite altered.



Figure H1. The original single-storey section of the house (Fisher 2016).

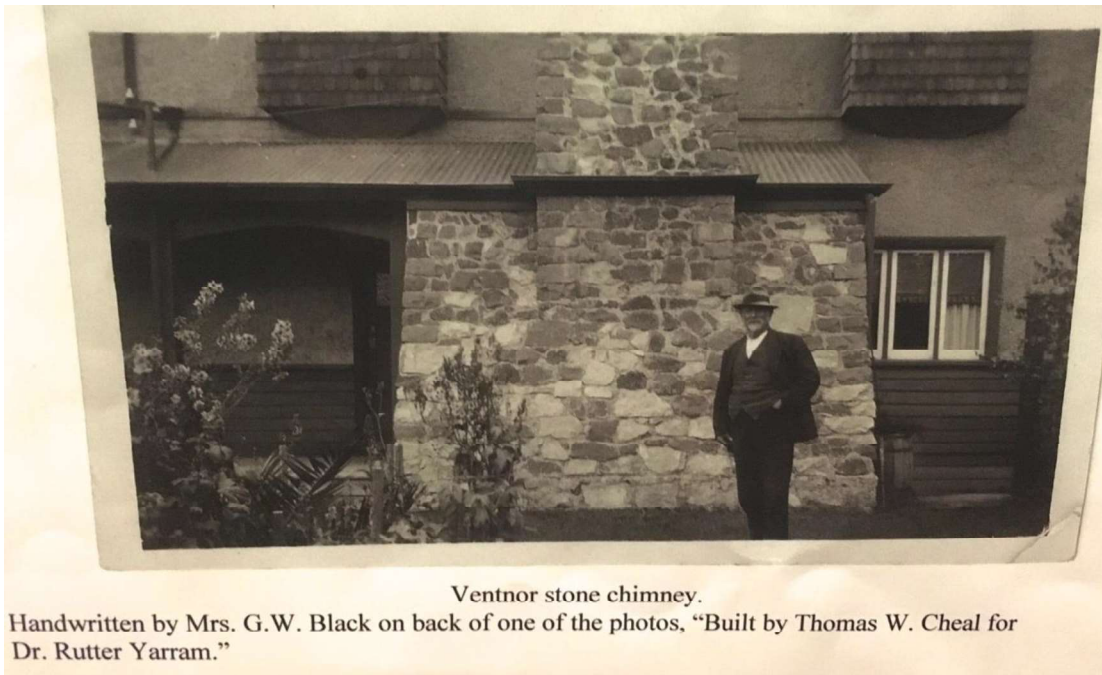


Figure H2. Early photo of Ventnor (Fisher 2016).

Sources

Australian handbook (1903), as cited in Victorian Places 'Yarram', <<http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/maffra>>, accessed Feb 2016.

Cazaly's Contract Reporter (CCR), as cited by Professor Harriet Edquist

Context Pty Ltd (2005), *Wellington Shire Heritage Study & Thematic Environmental History*, prepared for Wellington Shire Council

Edquist, Professor Harriet, Professor of Architectural History in the RMIT School of Architecture and Design, personal communication via email, 11 January 2016.

Fisher, James, current owner and descendent of original owner, personal communication via phone May 2016.

Fletcher, Meredith & Linda Kennett (2005), *Wellington Landscapes, History and Heritage in a Gippsland Shire*, Maffra.

Hawker, John, Heritage Officer (Horticulture) at Heritage Victoria, personal communication via email, 13 January 2016.

Land Victoria (LV), Certificates of Title, as cited above Victorian Places, 'Yarram', <<http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

The Age

The Argus

Yarram & District Historical Society (YDHS) collection: historical information and photos generously provided by Cate Renfrey, Nov 2015. Including the booklet 'Heritage Trail along Commercial Road, Yarram'.

Yarram & District Historical Society (YDHS) website, 'The history of Yarram & District', <<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ydhs/history%20of%20yarram.htm>>, accessed 16 February 2016.

Description

This section describes the place in 2016. Refer to the Place History for additional important details describing historical changes in the physical fabric.

Ventnor House is located on the corner of Commercial Road and King Street, at the northern end of the main commercial strip in Yarram. Built in 1912, the Federation Arts and Crafts house has an asymmetrical plan designed to front both Commercial Road and King Street. To the rear is a two-storey 1920 addition of a similar design. The house is set back on the lot, behind a row of mature Canary Island Palms on the west and south boundaries.

Figure D1. The 1912 section of the house is single-storey with a complex hip-and-gable roof, with large gabled-ends to the two main elevations. The roof was originally clad with galvanised corrugated iron, but this has been replaced with Colorbond decking (which is growing lichen) and retains four original rendered chimneys. The house has wide eaves with exposed rafter ends, and lined eaves to the gabled-ends with timber brackets. The gabled-ends are clad with shingles (overpainted) and have double louvered arched vents to the roof space. The exterior walls are clad with weatherboard to the lower half, and roughcast render to the top half (overpainted). The entrance is beneath the gabled-bay of the south elevation, in a large recessed porch with a weatherboard-clad balustrade. The gabled-bays have box windows (with geometric leadlight timber casement windows) with skillioned-profile roofs clad with scalloped shingles. Other windows to the house are generally timber casement windows (with geometric square leadlight) in groups of three. The 1912 house is in very good condition and retains a very high level of integrity.

Figure D2. A detail of the box windows show a skillion roof clad with scalloped shingles, a splayed base of mitred weatherboards, and geometric leadlight timber casement windows.

Figure D3. The 1920 section of the house is located to the rear (west), and is two-storeys in height. It is sympathetic in design to the 1912 section. The ground floor has a verandah, and the walls are clad with weatherboard to the bottom half, with roughcast render to the top half. The second storey has panels of roughcast render with timber strapping, and shingles to the gabled-ends. Box windows are also clad with timber shingles. A notable element of this section is a very grand unpainted random rubble stone chimney that extends from the ground floor above the second storey on the south elevation. The 1920 section of the house is in good condition and retains a very high level of integrity.

Figure D4. A detail of the south elevation shows the trunk of the palm tree, and the Arts and Crafts unpainted chimney seen from King Street, on the southern boundary of the property.

Figure D5. The west and south boundaries are lined with a total of five mature Canary Island Date Palms that date to the 1920s or 1930s.



Figure D1. The single-storey is the original section of the house that dates to 1912. The entrance porch is on the right. The original galvanised corrugated iron has been replaced with Colorbond decking (which is growing lichen).



Figure D2. The projecting box window on the west elevation with a detail of the splayed base clad with mitred weatherboards, geometric leadlight timber windows and shingled roof. Half of the base of the exterior walls is timber, with roughcast render to the top half of the wall.



Figure D3. The 1920 section of the house is two-storey and similar in design to the original 1912 section. It is notable for its large two-storey external stone chimney.



Figure D4. The palm trunk, and Arts and Crafts unpainted chimney seen from King Street, on the southern boundary of the property.



Figure D5. The west and south boundaries retain mature Canary Island Date Palms.

Sources

All photos taken in 2015 by Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd as part of Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study.

Comparative analysis

Ventnor House, its setting and palms, is a fine example of a substantial Federation and Interwar Arts and Crafts style house and surgery, in Wellington Shire, particularly in Yarram. The single-storey weatherboard section was built in 1912, followed by a sympathetic two-storey addition in 1920.

Many Federation houses listed on the Heritage Overlay display much less architectural accomplishment than the subject site, which is notable for its architectural style, elaborate detail and size. Other examples also appear to favour the Bungalow style in comparison to Ventnor House which is Arts and Crafts in style.

7 Barkly St, Sale – 1923 timber bungalow with a contemporary fence. The single-storey house retains timber shingles, half-timbering to the gabled ends and a circular bay window. It is of aesthetic significance as an outstanding example of the Californian Bungalow residential styles of the 1920s, although it has recent large but sympathetic extensions. (HO242)

15 Barkly St, Sale – A modest Inter war Mediterranean Bungalow with a contemporary fence that is significant as an intact example of the style (date not confirmed). (HO120)

Management Guidelines

Whilst landowners are not obliged to undertake restoration works, these guidelines provide recommendations to facilitate the retention and enhancement of the culturally significant place, its fabric and its setting, when restoration works or alterations to the building are proposed. They also identify issues particular to the place and provide further detailed advice where relevant. The guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and a pragmatic approach will be taken when considering development proposals. Alternative approaches to those specified in the guidelines will be considered where it can be demonstrated that a desirable development outcome can be achieved that does not impact on a place's heritage integrity.

1. Setting (views, fencing, landscaping, paths, trees, streetscape)

1.1. Paving

- 1.1.1. For Federation era houses, the most appropriate paving is asphalt. Concrete is not recommended but if required should have a surface of sand coloured and size exposed aggregate.

2. Additions And New Structures

- 2.1. New structures should be restricted to the rear of the property as shown on the aerial map below.
- 2.2. If an extension is to have a concrete slab floor, ensure it will not reduce the air flow under the historic masonry building.

3. Accessibility

3.1. Ramps

3.1.1. Removable ramp construction

- 3.1.1.1. A metal framed ramp which allows air to flow under it, to ensure the subfloor vents of the building are not obstructing good airflow under the floor which will allow the wall structure to evaporate moisture and reduce termite and rot attack to the subfloor structure and damp in brick/stone walls.

- 3.2. Metal bannisters may be installed at the front steps. They are functional and minimalist and they have a minor visual impact on the architecture and therefore they are a suitable design for an accessible addition.

4. Reconstruction and Restoration

If an opportunity arises, consider restoring and reconstructing the following.

- 4.1. Clad the roof in the original product, galvanised corrugated iron (which, unlike Colorbond, does not grow lichen, and unlike Zinalume, does not remain highly reflective for years).
- 4.2. Roofing, spouting and down pipes
 - 4.2.1. Use galvanised corrugated iron roofing, spouting, down pipes and rain heads. The thicker steel with 2 coats of galvanizing is recommended for more durability.
 - 4.2.2. Do not use Zinalume or Colorbond.
 - 4.2.3. Light-Grey Colorbond would look similar to corrugated galvanised steel, from the street, but has the disadvantage of looking 'plastic' on site, and it will grow lichen on the south side as the current roof has.
 - 4.2.4. Use ogee profile spouting, and round diameter down pipes.
- 4.3. Fences
 - 4.3.1. Reconstruct a Federation era style fence, no higher than 1400mm, preferably based on the original fence design (historical research required).

Resources

Wellington Shire Heritage Advisor

NOTE: The blue shaded area is the preferred location for additions and new development:



KEY

- ▣ Recommended for Heritage Overlay
- Title boundary

Ventnor House 135 Commercial Rd, Yarram

Project: Wellington Shire Stage 2 Heritage Study
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Author: Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd
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