



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November, 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Hill 60 is aesthetically significant as an early homestead in the Belmont area. Stylistically the building is a simple Federation Queen Anne style residence overlaid with elements of Inter-War Free Classical style. Important elements of this amalgamation include, dominant portico, battered limestone piers, extremely decorative leadlights, stuccoed gables and elaborate interior joinery and ceiling details. (Criterion 1.2)

Although *Hill 60* was prominently located on a high portion of land between Great Eastern Highway and the Swan River, it has been obscured by the expansion of the St. John of God Hospital in recent years. (Criterion 1.3)

Hill 60 takes advantage of its site by exploiting views up and down the river and across the river flats to Perth. (Criterion 1.3)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The establishment of the hospital on the site is significant in view of the prevailing philosophy of the time for siting such facilities in areas which were subject to good sea breezes and pleasant surroundings. (Criterion 2.1)

Hill 60 is historically significant as it is one of the few remaining early residences in the Belmont area. (Criterion 2.2)

The site is important for the presence of a fresh water spring to which neighbouring settlers had access, for their own needs. (Criterion 2.2)

Hill 60 is important for its association with Thomas Ryan who was a prominent mining and horse racing identity. Ryan's settlement at *Hill 60* was indicative of the trend, at the turn of the century, for prominent racing identities to settle in the Belmont area. This industry, which became established in the area in the 1880s, was instrumental in the development of Belmont. (Criteria 2.2 and 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* North Ryde NSW, Angus & Robertson 1989.

Hill 60 is important in that it provided the opportunity for the establishment of the first hospital in the district and formed the basis of the progressive development of St. John of God Hospital. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The site has the potential to reveal archaeological information about the material cultural remains of past human activity on this site. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Hill 60 has social significance for its successive uses as residence, hospital, convent, hostel for aged females, lecture and conference centre, and medical centre. Its perceived value to the local community is evidenced by its inclusion in the City of Belmont's Municipal Heritage Inventory. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Hill 60 is rare due to its unusual design features and as one of the few remaining early homesteads in the district. (Criterion 5.1)

Hill 60 has the potential to demonstrate a distinctive way of life which was enjoyed by landowners whose wealth enabled them to purchase idyllic properties with features such as views, access to the river for transport and recreation, sea breezes, fresh water and substantial homes. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Hill 60 is representative of the type of residence constructed by prosperous businessmen and entrepreneurs in Western Australia at the turn of the century. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

Hill 60 is in good condition for its age and considering the modifications made to it in recent years. There are minor indications of water damage to the ceilings and rising damp.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Hill 60 has a high level of integrity. Although the place has not been used as a private residence since 1934, the original intent remains obvious.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Hill 60 has a moderate level of authenticity. Prominent decorative and design features remain intact as does the general layout of the rooms. There is little evidence of interior wall finishes. The rear of the house has suffered the most alterations with the enclosure of the verandah and the removal of access and balustrading to the roof garden. The steeply pitched roof over the portico has also been removed.

There is little evidence of the landscape features which are shown in early photographs, such as: plantings, terracing along the river frontage, boathouse, retaining walls and garden layout at the front of the house.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Fiona Bush, Archaeologist. The physical evidence has been compiled by Alice Steedman, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Hill 60 is single-storey house which was constructed for Robert and Elizabeth Bechtel in c.1902.

The history of the house is closely entwined with the early development of Belmont. One of Belmont's earliest settlers was John Wall Hardey of Grove Farm, who purchased Swan Loc. 34 from J.P. Beete, a Captain in the 21st Fusileers, for £200 in October 1854.¹ His son Robert Davy, purchased part of Swan Loc. 34, (916 acres) from his father in 1873.² Robert built Belmont House, and established an orchard and vineyard in 1880.³

Bechtel arrived in Western Australia in May 1888, accompanied by his wife and child.⁴ He came from a grape growing region in South Australia, specifically from the small town of Tanunda. He was a saddler by trade and on his arrival established a shop in Perth.⁵ Sometime after his arrival, Bechtel took up the management of Hardey's orchard and vineyard. It is not clear if this management took place prior to Hardey leasing the property, or if it was a direct result of it. The property was leased in April 1889 and Hardey moved back to the family home, Grove Farm, located near the present day Parry Field. Hardey sold Belmont House in 1900 and it was converted to the Sandringham Hotel.⁶

In 1901, the Bechtels purchased a portion of Swan Loc. 34 from Hardey, (4 acres, 3 roods and 10 perches)⁷. This land was subject to a reservation due to the presence of a spring in the north east corner of the property. It was incumbent upon the owner to permit free access to this spring and to keep the existing pipes, water tank and windmill in good order.⁸ In the following year they sold a portion of the land (1 acre, 1 rood and 20 perches)⁹ to Augustine Rieusset, an architect,¹⁰ and were listed as paying rates on a house and vacant land on Guildford Road (now Great Eastern Highway).¹¹

At the time of the house's construction, the only other residences close to the Bechtels were Grove Farm, Belmont House and St. Columbans. All of these were situated on large blocks with a river frontage. An advertisement in the

¹ Memorial No. V/442, Conveyance of property dated 17/10/1854, Acc. 1800

² Memorial No. VII/1183, Memorial of Mortgage dated 1/6/1873, Acc 1800.

³ Conversation with Anne Spalding of Belmont Historical Society.

⁴ Erickson, R. *Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians, 1829-1888*, Vol. 1, (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987), p. 46. [Name listed under Anderson (Bechtel)].

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Telephone interview by Alice Steedman with Anne Spalding of Belmont Historical Society, 23/7/1997.

⁷ Certificate of Title, Vol. 231 Fol. 182.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Electoral Rolls of Legislative Council, 1908.

¹¹ Belmont Roads Board Rate Books, Acc 1681/1, 1899/00 - 1901/02.

West Australian in 1904 lists a property matching the description of *Hill 60* for sale. It is described as:

Belmont - Fine 8 roomed brick house, H and C bath, 3.5 acres orchard, river frontage, bathing and boat house, water laid on. Situate between Guildford Road and River 3.5 miles from Perth. Price £2,300 terms can be arranged.

James Morrison, Barrack St., Perth, 1/1/1904.¹²

The property was not sold until 1909.

At the turn of the century, Belmont was still a small community with limited facilities. However, a race track had been established in 1852 (this became Ascot Race Track) and it was in part due to its presence, that development commenced in Belmont. The race track became so popular that, after the construction of the Guildford - Fremantle Railway in 1891, a spur line was specially constructed across the river to Belmont (1892) - also serving local industries such as Brisbane and Wunderlich and later G. Rowlands Produce Stores.¹³ During the first quarter of the twentieth century, horse-breeders and trainers became established in the area, at the same time attracting other related trades and businesses.

At the same time as the development of horse-racing, the discovery that the area had high quality clays led to the establishment of a number of brickworks and potteries. All of these interests led to the limited development of the area, although Belmont did not experience any real growth until after World War One.

The Bechtels sold their property to Thomas and Henrietta Ryan in 1909. Thomas Ryan was a product of the gold rush era. Originally from Victoria, he and three partners established the lucrative Fenian Gold Mine, near Meekatharra, in 1903. Ryan became a well known identity in the district, buying a number of residences and a hotel (the Commonwealth) in Meekatharra and the pastoral station, Killara.¹⁴ In 1909 he purchased 'a magnificent home on the banks of the Swan River which was called Tanunda.'¹⁵ (Presumably, the Bechtel's had given the house this name after their home town in South Australia.) The house was purchased by Ryan so that his children could attend school in Perth, while he divided his time between his interests in Meekatharra and the city racecourses. A photograph of the property, shown in Battye's *Cyclopaedia*, must have been taken shortly after Ryan's acquisition, as it shows a single-storey house with twin gables to the front facade and a front verandah with a decorative wooden valance. A water tank can be seen on the eastern side of the house.

Ryan was a keen horse-breeder and his horses were very successful in the local circuit. Shortly after 1911, the Ryans did extensive renovations to their home, which can be seen in a number of photographs which were taken

¹² *West Australian* 13 January 1904, p.10.

¹³ Wilson, F. 'Belmont as it was.....', in *Looking Back*, Belmont Historical Society (unpub, n.d.), p. 36.

¹⁴ Heydon. P.R. (O.A.M.) *Meekatharra "End of the Earth"* (Dominion Mining and Hesperian Press, West Perth, 1994), pp. 257-264.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 258.

sometime after 1918.¹⁶ This date is only an estimate and is based on the use of the name 'Hill 60', which can be clearly seen on the house in these photographs. Apparently, the name of the house was changed from Tanunda to *Hill 60* sometime during World War One. *Hill 60* is thought to be derived from the Battle of Hill 60 which was the designation of a hill in France where an Australian battalion was trapped during fighting in 1916. A number of diggers from the Murchison District were involved in this battle.¹⁷

The photographs show extensive views of the exterior and interior of the house. The alterations include the addition of a portico with a steeply pitched roof to the front, the reconstruction of the front and rear verandahs (the timber posts were replaced with half height, battered limestone piers and a timber framework which appears to have supported insect screens) and the addition of a roof garden at the rear. The alterations were carried out by Samuel Pedersen, a local builder, using bricks from Sugars brickworks.¹⁸

The interior photographs show rich furnishings, decorative cornices and ceilings, elaborate leadlight windows, an ornate timber mantle-piece in the drawing room and decorative timber fretwork around the bay window alcove in the drawing room, while in the dining room it was used as a room divider.

Photographs of the exterior show landscaped grounds with garden beds at the front and sides, while at the rear, a promenade was built behind the house and the sloping ground was terraced down to the river. A jetty with a small octagonal boathouse can be seen amongst the reeds on the riverbank. A large water tank and a collection of outbuildings are visible on the eastern side of the house.

Ryan died in 1916 of silicosis contracted from his work in the mines, and in 1920 his widow married Fred Stephens. They sold the property to milliner, Lucy Heaney in 1925 and moved back to Meekatharra and later to *Killara*.¹⁹ Lucy Heaney owned the property for only two years, selling it in 1927 to Daniel Curtis. Curtis was a businessman who ran a bottling business and owned the Red Castle Brewery at Burswood. A new title was issued to Curtis and once again the reservation on the spring was noted. In 1934, Curtis purchased Lots 1 - 5 (on the eastern side of the property) and built a house (Keer Weer) for his daughter, Mavis Harris, on either Lot 3 or 4.²⁰ In the same year that Curtis purchased these additional lots, he sold *Hill 60*, together with lots 1 and 2, to the Sisters of St. John of God.²¹ Lots 3 and 4 were retained by Curtis for his daughter, who inherited them on his death in 1940.²²

¹⁶ The Title document shows that mortgages were taken out in 1911 and 1912, suggesting that the renovations were carried out in this period. The Title Deed (Vol. 323 Fol. 166) was in Henrietta's name. The 1918 photographs are held by Paul Jones, a great-grand-son of Thomas Ryan.

¹⁷ Brymora, Fr. W. *Mount Magnet Gold Town at the Crossroads* (Shire of Mount Magnet, 1979), p. 37.

¹⁸ Belmont Historical Society *Belmont Historic Sites* (unpub, n.d.), p. 18.

¹⁹ Certificate of Title, Vol. 323 Fol. 166.

²⁰ Information obtained from Belmont Historical Society.

²¹ The Sisters of St John of God, a congregation of nursing sisters, was founded in Ireland in 1871. The order came to Western Australia in 1895 in response to an urgent appeal by Bishop Gibney for nursing sisters for the benefit and care of the sick in Perth. They were initially given two cottages in Adelaide Terrace - one for a hospital and the other for a convent. The Sisters

Mother Ignatius Lynagh was the Provincial Superior at the time of the purchase and she was keen to establish a hospital in the Belmont area. Mother Ignatius and Sisters Christina, Bernardine and Eunan were responsible for preparing the house to accommodate patients, while the stables were adapted as a residence for the Sisters. No other hospital facilities had been previously available for the residents of the Belmont district. After the construction of a new hospital building in 1936, the nuns used *Hill 60* as a convent, until a new convent was opened on the site in 1964.²³

A photograph held by the Sisters (date unknown), shows *Hill 60* looking much as it did in the days that the Ryans owned it. The only changes appear to be the removal of the name from the portico's parapet and the placement of a cross at the top of the portico's steeply pitched roof.

Only minor alterations were carried out to the house over the years. In 1968, although the building was modernised to accommodate 'aged ladies', it was not extensively altered.

Changes in hospital regulations forced the aged hostel to close in 1984 and the building was subsequently used as a lecture and conference centre. The building underwent superficial changes in 1989 when it was altered to accommodate the Fatima Medicentre. These alterations were carried out by Silver, Thomas, Hanley Architects.²⁴

In 1996, the Sisters sold the hospital as part of a facility rationalisation programme. A new hospital had been constructed at Murdoch and the Subiaco hospital further developed. New titles to the land indicate that rights to access water on the site still exist.²⁵

Hill 60 and the other buildings on the site are currently vacant.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Hill 60 is located within the former St John of God Hospital complex at 76 Great Eastern Highway, Belmont. It sits towards the rear of the site backing on to a steep embankment that leads down to the Swan River.

It is flanked by the two-storey main hospital building to the north-east and the convent and chapel buildings to the south-west. An enclosed walkway connecting the convent and hospital has been constructed in front of *Hill 60*, effectively obscuring the old residence from view.

Exterior

Hill 60 is a rendered and painted brick building with a hipped terracotta tiled roof with decorative finials and ridge capping. A large gable projects over a wing to the south-west and a smaller gable over a bay window to the north-east. Two small gablets are centrally placed on the front (south-east) elevation of the roof. All gables are detailed with decorative plaster scroll

remained in Adelaide Terrace until 1898, when they moved to a new convent and hospital in Subiaco. They also worked extensively amongst the miners' camps in the Eastern Goldfields.

²² It has not been determined which of the owners named the place Hill 60; nor has the date of change been determined.

²³ Historical information held by the Sisters of St. John of God.

²⁴ Plans held by the Sisters of St. John of God, Subiaco.0...

²⁵ Certificate of Title vol. 1041 Fol. 71.

work on a stuccoed panel. A number of chimneys project through the roof. They are slightly corbelled and have simple terracotta chimney pots. The brickwork of the chimneys has been painted.

A large, rendered brick classically detailed portico defines the entry. It has corbelled arched openings flanked by tapered columns defining the corners. A dentilled frieze sits below a prominent entablature upon which sits a simple parapet.

The front verandah of *Hill 60* runs along the south-east and part of the south-west elevation. It has tapered tuckpointed limestone piers with rendered corbelled caps. Some weathering is evident on the limestone. The verandah has been enclosed with rendered brick walls and timber framed fixed windows are centrally located between the piers. The verandah beam is still visible above the brickwork.

A small porch at the end of the south-west gable roof has also been enclosed. A ruled ashlar finish is visible on the remaining original walls of the porch. A face brick retaining wall has been constructed around the perimeter of this section of *Hill 60* and continues down past the rear of the house. The level of the land to the west has been substantially lowered.

A further enclosed verandah is located to the rear of the south-west gable and has been enclosed in a similar manner to the verandah at the front of the house.

A flat-roofed portion of the building, presumably the earlier roof garden, is located immediately to the north-west of this verandah. This section of *Hill 60* is more simply detailed than the front portion of the house. Whilst all original windows are double hung timber sashes, the windows in the front portion of the house have elaborate leadlight panes and rendered dressings below the sills. The original windows in the rear portion have clear glass and simply rendered sills. A stuccoed band of brickwork runs around the corner of the building immediately below the eaves line of the flat-roof.

The rear verandah has been enclosed with large fixed pane windows which sit on a low wall. A low pitched roof, supported on steel pipe columns, has been added to the rear of the building. Expansive views across the Swan River to the City of Perth, Maylands claypits and upstream are available from the rear of the house.

The north-east side of the house also exhibits an area of enclosed verandah and a window dating from the 1950's or 60's. The bay window has 6 double hung sashes exhibiting elaborate leadlight panes and a generous rendered sill. The low wall below the windows is limestone. Wide timber-lined eaves surmount the bay.

To the south of the bay window, a small leadlight window surrounded in an elaborate classically inspired rendered dressing, is flanked by two single French doors set in plain square openings. The doors are fixed in position and have leadlights which are similar to other original windows, however the joinery appears to be of recent origin.

Interior

Hill 60 is entered via the main hospital building and along the walkway which connects the hospital and convent. A short ramp leads up to the portico. Doors on either side of the walkway lead out to the grounds surrounding the house.

The south-west opening of the portico has been infilled with a timber panel containing 6 panes of original leadlight, presumably relocated from elsewhere in the building. A door on the west leads to the enclosed verandah and a set of double doors to the north leads to a lobby area. The frame in which the doors to the lobby are located has been altered to accommodate double doors. The remnant of the original fanlight over the doors indicates that the opening was originally a single door with sidelights. Original leadlights exist in the fanlight but the doors have reproduction leadlights in a similar style.

The leadlight in the door that leads to the enclosed verandah is quite different from those exhibited in the main windows of the house. Whilst other leadlights are based on a rose motif and are almost Nouveau in style, the leadlight in this door is a much more restrained and stylised iris and lily pattern.

The lobby is a wide passage way that leads through an arched opening to a drawing room. It exhibits an ornate plaster ceiling, simple splayed top skirtings and elaborate cut-out architraves around original window and door openings. The arched opening has marble topped sills with rendered dressings which frame the opening.

The drawing room is a very large room with a bay window at its eastern end and two door openings at the western end - all exhibiting the elaborate architraves. A striking carved timber mantle piece is located on the northern wall. It reaches almost to the ceiling and has columns on either side wrapped with carved dragon-serpents. A bevelled edged mirror is set into the mantle above a small shelf. The fireplace is tiled in a white fully vitrified tile with delicate flower motifs. The hearth has been carpeted over. The drawing room also has an elaborate plaster ceiling and cornice and simple splayed top skirtings. A small area of damp is visible in the ceiling above the fireplace. This may be due to a failure in the chimney flashing or cracked tiles around the chimney. This room also exhibits a picture rail.

The enclosed verandah at the front of the house has been subdivided to provide reception and utility rooms. Two rooms at the front of the house have been reduced in size to allow for an internal passage way behind the line of the original external wall. Original windows, doors and ceilings have been removed from these areas, however original timber mantle pieces and high skirtings have been retained. The skirtings in these areas are more decorative than those found in the lobby and drawing room. New dividing walls in this area are stud-framed.

A long passageway leads from the drawing room to the rear of the house with a number of doors leading off to both sides. Two corbelled archways punctuate the long length of the passage which has skirting similar to those seen in the front of the house as well as those in the drawing room. The passage has a plain plaster ceiling with a decorative cornice.

The timber six-panelled door immediately opposite the drawing room is set within a large frame with leadlight highlight and sidelights which appear to have been relocated from elsewhere in the building. These leadlights are again more stylised than those exhibited in the main windows of the house.

This door leads to a further reception and waiting area and two consulting rooms. The former porch at the south-western gable has been enclosed to provide a utility space. The consulting rooms are partitioned with stud walls. The first consulting room has a chimney breast but the fireplace has been bricked-in and the mantle removed. A doorway has been bricked in adjacent to the chimney breast. The second consulting room has three elaborate leadlight windows to the north-western wall and also has highlight windows on the south-western wall. A further three leadlight windows are located in the external wall opposite the second consulting room. Damp is visible on the walls below each of the large leadlight windows. The area to the north is likely to be related to the construction of the retaining wall outside the window and the area to the south to the enclosure of the front verandah.

A large plaster centrepiece is located in the waiting area ceiling, however the cornices in this area and in the consulting rooms appear to be reproductions. No original skirtings exist in this area.

Further down the passageway on the south-west side another suite of consulting rooms can be accessed through one of two doors. The first accesses a utility room which leads onto an enclosed verandah area, the second, which is further down the passage, is set in a large arched frame with leadlight highlights and sidelights. The leadlights in this door are again different to those found elsewhere in the house. This door leads into a reception area which has two original rose motif leadlights set into timber panels in square openings in the northern wall. The southern corner of the room is truncated indicating the previous existence of a fireplace and a large arched opening has been made in the south-western wall which leads through to a waiting area. The reception area has a decorative cornice and a picture rail. All skirtings and architraves in this consulting suite have been replaced with modern reproductions.

The waiting area also leads through to the enclosed verandah, which in turn leads into the room below the former roof garden. There is no indication of the location of any means of access to the roof garden in this location. A small area of damp is visible on the wall of the enclosed verandah adjacent to this room, however stains on the carpet may mean that it is related to some plant or equipment which was previously in this location. A further area of damp is located at the southern end of the enclosed verandah.

On the north-east side of the main passageway, immediately adjacent to the drawing room, two short corridors lead to a number of toilet facilities and a cleaner's room. These rooms all exhibit modern finishes and fixtures. Further to the north is a further suite of consulting rooms. These can also be accessed via two doors. The first, a timber panelled door accessing the rear of the reception area, and the second a door set in a large arched frame similar to that of the suite on the other side of the passage.

The consulting rooms are located in the enclosed rear verandah of the house and in a smaller room on the north-east side. A reeded dado moulding is

evident in this room. This suite also has a utility room built into part of the enclosed side verandah. No original skirting, architraves or ceilings exist in this portion of the house.

A door at the end of the corridor leads to the enclosed rear verandah which has kitchen benches built into the western end. A set of double glass-panelled doors leads onto the rear garden area overlooking the river.

13.3 REFERENCES

Hocking Planning and Architecture, *Photographic Survey and Measured Drawings, Hill 60 Homestead (former St. John of God Hospital Site, Rivervale)*, prepared for Warren Tucker Pty. Ltd., (unpub. April 1997).

13.4 FURTHER RESEARCH
