

## Heritage Citation



### Broadacres

#### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Austral Plywood Manager's Residence
<b>Addresses</b>	At 28 Curzon Street, Tennyson, Queensland 4105
<b>Type of place</b>	House
<b>Period</b>	World War II 1939-1945
<b>Style</b>	Old English
<b>Lot plan</b>	L18_RP37712; L17_RP37712; L16_RP37712; L15_RP37712
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 29 November 2019 Date of Citation — December 2017
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

This brick and tile brick house was built circa 1942-45 as the family home of Robert Henry Bentley. Bentley was the owner of the Austral Plywoods Pty Ltd sawmill and factory, established by his father at the northern end of Curzon Street in 1925. Although a modest home, the quality of the construction and design reflects the success

of the Austral Plywoods business which became a leading firm in the plywood industry in Brisbane and the rest of the state.

As Brisbane architect, EP Trewern, was engaged by Austral Plywoods to design various amenities for their factory in Curzon Street during World War II, and called tenders for “alterations to a brick residence” in Curzon Street in 1945, it is possible Trewern designed the house.

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## History

This brick and tile house was built for Austral Plywood (Pty) Ltd. circa 1942-45 as a residence for Robert Henry Bentley, the son of the company's founder, Robert Halliwell Bentley. The house is located on a 1,618 m<sup>2</sup> (64 perch) block on the eastern side of Curzon Street (formerly Wilson Street) in the predominantly industrial suburb of Tennyson.

Tennyson is a riverside suburb located some seven miles from the central business district of Brisbane. From the 1870s, the flood prone flats were used for growing sugar cane and other crops. A sugar mill was established on the site where the Tennyson coal fired power station was later built in the early 1950s. After World War I, Tennyson continued to attract industry and commerce including a cigarette factory, wine warehouse and railway goods yard. Some residential development had occurred in the streets around Curzon Street by the 1940s, but most of these houses have since been replaced with industrial buildings.

The 1940s were a challenging time for construction in Brisbane due to the outbreak of war in 1939. Although the construction of homes continued in the early years of World War II, building restrictions introduced by the Commonwealth Government under the National Security Act of 1940 saw building activity reduce drastically after the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the entry of Japan into the war in December 1941. Construction was also hampered by the scarcity of labour and materials caused by the war. During 1942-43, most new buildings in Brisbane were air raid shelters with the occasional factory, church or hospital and by 1944, there was very little civilian construction at all. Building restrictions continued after the conclusion of the war into 1946. Continuing building material shortages continued to thwart the drive to erect sufficient homes to meet the continuing housing crisis during the post-war period.

The production of timber veneer and plywood in Australia dates from around 1907 when Beale and Co, a firm of piano manufacturers in Sydney, used machines to slice timber veneers for piano construction. The use of a circular lathe to peel hoop pine to make three ply veneer was introduced to Brisbane within a few years and in 1916, Brims and Co established a plywood mill at Yeerongpilly. Queensland timber veneer was exported to the United Kingdom during the 1930s and by the 1940s, the plywood and veneer industry was based in Queensland with a total of 44 mills throughout Australia.

The Austral Plywoods Company was founded by Robert Halliwell Bentley, a Brisbane dairy farmer who established a factory at the north western end of Wilson Street (now Curzon Street), in 1925. The company was registered as plywood manufacturers and timber merchants. Initially, the factory produced strawberry boxes, however it was soon at the forefront of the emerging timber veneer industry. During the 1930s it participated in a three year scientific research programme aimed at eradicating borers from timber products with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. At this time, Austral Plywoods displayed examples of their timber products in

their Tennyson office and contemporary newspaper articles described their use in fashionable new residences and other substantial buildings, for example, the new State Insurance Building in Edward Street.<sup>1</sup> Logs were delivered to the Tennyson mill and factory via a railway siding. Austral Plywoods extended its operations into northern Queensland purchasing mills at El Arish and Cedar Creek near Proserpine. After Robert Halliwell Bentley retired from running the family firm, his son, Robert Henry Bentley took over the business. By the early 1940s, Austral Plywoods was a leading manufacturer of timber veneer and plywood products in Queensland.

The present parcel of four allotments at 28 Curzon Street was purchased by the Austral Plywoods company in 1942. There is no evidence of any residence on the site prior to the 1940s. Electoral records show that Robert Henry Bentley, then the owner/manager of the family timber mill, lived at the house in Curzon Street from at the 1940s until the 1960s. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Bentleys rented the house to the Swords family, whose son, Richard Swords, was an employee of Austral Plywoods for many years until his retirement in the 2010s. Mr Swords claims that the house was built as the family home of Robert Henry Bentley and that it included an in ground wine cellar in the dining room and accommodation at the rear of the house which had housed Mrs Bentley's housekeeper.

Austral Plywoods engaged Brisbane Architect, EP Trewern in 1943 to oversee painting and "factory amenities" for the Tennyson factory. In April 1945, Trewern called for tenders for "alterations to brick residence" in Curzon Street. Although no record of Trewern designing a house at Tennyson for the Austral Plywood Company has been found to date, it is possible this tender refers to alterations to the brick house at 28 Curzon Street and that Trewern may have been the original architect of the house.

In 1948, title to the 28 Curzon Street property was transferred from Austral Plywoods to Robert Henry Bentley. However, title returned to Austral Plywoods in 1965 and remained in the company's ownership until 1973 when it was sold to the Committee for Direction of Fruit Marketing. The site was later owned by Herron Pharmaceutical who used the building as an office until 2009.

In 2017, the house at 28 Curzon Street is in use as a physiotherapy clinic.

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## Description

The subject house is lowset and constructed of red face brick with a multi form, tiled roof. There is a plain brick chimney at the rear of the main roof.

The front of the house has a projecting gabled roof with vertical gable infill and this feature is echoed on the adjoining garage on the southern side of the house. The garage has a pair of timber doors.

The house has a central entrance that is sheltered by a small porch formed by an opening in the front wall. A path leads from the front gate to the porch and entrance.

The house has several banks of multi-paned, timber casement windows and also features a "port hole" window in the front wall to the north of the entrance.

The front gate is flanked by a pair of brick pillars which form part of a low brick boundary wall. The gate is constructed of metal bars in a restrained design and this is echoed between the other brick pillars along the wall.

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## Statement of significance

### Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as a remnant of the former residential nature of the area south of the railway line in Tennyson during the 1930s and 1940s before local industry encompassed much of the suburb.

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#### Rarity

##### CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as a rare example in Tennyson of a 1940s brick house. It is also a rare remnant example of the residential nature of this area in the 1930s and 1940s.

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#### Representative

##### CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a representative example of a well built, brick house of considered scale, design and quality constructed during World War II at a time of building restrictions and labour and material shortages. Its characteristics include, but are not limited to, its low-set design with restrained detailing, high pitched, multi gabled roof with wide eaves, corner casement windows, projecting front room, an incorporated garage and corner entrance. The house demonstrates the transition from the interwar styles of domestic architecture to the austere designs of the post-war period in Brisbane.

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## Historical association

### CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a house built for the owner and manager of the Austral Plywood company which became a leading manufacturer of timber products by the 1930s. The close proximity of the house to the factory and the quality of its design and construction during World War II indicates the continued success of this firm.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
2. Queensland Certificates of Title and other records
3. Queensland Post Office Directories
4. Queensland Places website. <http://queenslandplaces.com.au/tennyson>. Retrieved 2 May 2017.
5. *Refidex Directory Maps: Greater Brisbane Area. (c1926-27)*
6. Australian History of Veneer and Plywood Manufacturing. <http://fennerschool-associated.anu.edu.au/fpt/plywood/history.html> Retrieved 22 May 2017.
7. Queensland Electoral Rolls
8. Queensland. Qimagery. 1936 aerial photos
9. Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland. 1939-1945
10. Information kindly provided by Austral Plywood, July 2017
11. Phone interview with Richard Swords, former resident and Austral Plywoods employee, 18 and 22 Aug 2017.

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**Note:** This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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