

## Heritage Citation



### Rochemount

#### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Tarong
<b>Addresses</b>	At 18 Blakeney Street, Highgate Hill, Queensland 4101
<b>Type of place</b>	Flat building, House
<b>Period</b>	Victorian 1860-1890
<b>Style</b>	Queen Anne
<b>Lot plan</b>	L28_RP54801; L29_RP54801; L30_RP54801; L31_RP54801
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 October 2000 Date of Citation — January 2009
<b>People/associations</b>	John Stephens (Occupant)

This impressive ridgetop residence was built circa 1877 for accountant John Stephens, who had also managed two large newspapers, 'The Courier' and 'The Queenslander'. Stephens and his family lived in the house until 1893 before it passed to a number of different owners. By 1926, the house had been converted into flats and featured a tennis court and substantial terraced gardens that surrounded the residence. The original block of land has since been subdivided and a number of flats built on the adjoining blocks.

## History

This magnificent residence which overlooks the suburb below it and the city beyond, was built around 1877 for John Stephens, an accountant. Stephens acquired a seven acre property, Portion 153, through a Deed of Grant in 1860 and soon after began subdividing the lower lying land into smaller allotments, keeping the ridge for himself. Around the same time that others such as Phillip Nott, one time Mayor of South Brisbane and builder, were building homes on land bought from him, Stephens also began construction of his grand home Rochemount on the highest part of his original block.<sup>1</sup>

John Stephens was the younger brother of Thomas Blackett Stephens, a newspaper proprietor and politician, who resided in historic Cumboquepa. John and his wife Charlotte had sailed to Australia around 1851 to join John's brother Thomas. They remained in Sydney for some years before coming to Brisbane. For twelve years, from 1862-1874, John was manager of his brother's newspaper 'The Courier' and later 'The Queenslander'.<sup>2</sup>  
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At the time of this house's construction, Stephens worked in the Queen Street office of John Bell Ellis and Co, commission and estate agents. He later went on to join the civil service department and later worked as a clerk in the Government Savings Bank.

Prior to building Rochemount, Stephens appears to have faced financial difficulty, as his property was placed in the hands of trustees in 1874. The trustees were his brother, Thomas Stephens, and Edward Deighton, who was Under Secretary for Public Works and Mines.

John Stephens and his family continued to reside at Rochemount until 1893 when it appears to have been leased to Mrs E Sexton, wife of prominent South Brisbane figure, Richard Sexton. In 1894 the property was sold to Annie Baynes and she and her husband Ernest lived in the home which they named Tarong until 1913.

By 1926, the house had been divided into flats and was known as Tarong Flats. At that stage, the property still extended down to Westbourne Street, and the house was surrounded by extensive terraced gardens, with a tennis court at the lower part of the grounds near Westbourne Street. Since the late 1920s the home's original property was gradually subdivided and a series of flats were built, each representing a different stage in the subdivision of the land.

(Streetscape)

Opposite 18 Blakeney Street and leading down towards Gladstone Road are a series of smaller pitched roof dwellings. Some of these obviously date from the Victorian era, but most have unfortunately suffered with

modern extensions, alterations and enclosed verandahs. As with many other streets in this area the roofscape and scale of these original dwellings has been maintained and thus ensured the continuity of the streetscape. Even the back of 18 Blakeney Street still manages to seem grand in comparison to these more humble dwellings. Number 14 Blakeney Street nearby has the grander scale of an upper middle class federation era residence with some Art Nouvea touches to the curvilinear forms of its timber detailing. It contributes greatly to the streetscape of this side of Blakeney Street as does number 10 further along with its large pyramidal roof which extends over its lattice enclosed verandahs, timber verandah posts and brackets, and tall brick chimney.

The streetscape also reflects the interesting mix of the well-to-do and the artisan/ craftsman. The more humble dwellings are indicative of the growing importance of the South Brisbane peninsular as a commercial and industrial centre which complemented the city centre and also the rapid urbanisation within the area governed by the South Brisbane Municipal Council from 1888.

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## Description

This is a very prominent residence on historic Blakeney Street located on part of its original site which has been sold off in portions over time. The original house has been greatly extended, mainly to accommodate its change in use from a residence to flats and back again. This is emphasised by its highly complex roof form. The house is oriented towards the river which makes the side of the house fronting Blakeney Street actually the back. The original front of the building which overlooked expansive grounds, has protruding rooms with bay windows and gable ends separated by low roofed expanses of verandah. A small gable is situated at this level, probably over an entry off the verandah.

Another gable roof extends to the east of the main roof and a larger one with a ridge at the same level as those truncated pyramid but north of it, extends to the west. As seen from Blakeney Street a smaller gable roof with cut out sections runs parallel to the road in front of the main roof. In front of this again are two different lean-to roofs, one a recent addition.

A separate section of the building sits right on the Blakeney Street alignment and currently sees use as a garage. The roofscape also features a myriad of ventilators and two large brick chimneys.

The house is predominantly constructed of timber but has brick fireplaces. The verandahs feature paired posts and timber brackets, and similar timber detailing features below the barge boards in the cable ends.

A series of flats from various stages of Highgate Hill's development are situated on the original site, which has slowly been subdivided. Its extent though, can still be seen on Westbourne Street in the form of the original fence, portions of which still exist right along the original frontage.

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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 it reflects the process which occurred in South Brisbane in which many of the grand estates were subdivided into smaller allotments.

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#### CRITERION A

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

as it reflects the changing perception of South Brisbane from a location for the residences of the wealthy to an area for lower middle class rental properties/residences, exemplified by its change from an older style residential property of the nineteenth century, to flats in the twentieth.

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### Aesthetic

#### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine intact example of a large 1870s residence located on a hill for its aspect and status, and for its contribution to the streetscape of Blakeney Street.

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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

for its association with the influential Stephens family which made a significant contribution to the social, civic and cultural life of the area.

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## References

1. Titles Office Records and Post Office Directories
  2. Reminiscences by Ann Finlay, Grand-daughter of T.B. Stephens, Royal Queensland Historical Society files
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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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