

## Heritage Citation

### Rothley

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 163 Swann Road, Taringa, Queensland 4068
<b>Type of place</b>	House
<b>Period</b>	Federation 1890-1914
<b>Style</b>	Arts and Crafts
<b>Lot plan</b>	L122_RP23372; L1_RP23377; L124_RP23372; L123_RP23372
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 29 November 2019 Date of Citation — July 2016
<b>People/associations</b>	Hall & Dods (Architect)
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (F) Technical; (H) Historical association

'Rothley', a fine, brick residence, was built in 1897 on the ridge of Swann Road for Dr Andrew William Orr, a leading Brisbane eye specialist.

Dr Orr engaged the Brisbane architectural firm of Hall and Dods to design his expensive new home. Rothley is one of the earliest houses in Brisbane designed by Robin Dods, who is well known for his elegant reinterpretation of the Queensland vernacular timber house. Rothley is unusual as a brick example of Dods' domestic work.

#### History

This fine, brick residence was built in 1897 on a large block (1991 m<sup>2</sup>) for Brisbane medical practitioner, Dr Andrew William Orr. It is situated on the ridge of Swann Road overlooking the city and the surrounding mountain

ranges.

The site was part of more than 46 acres (18.6 ha) owned by Graham Lloyd Hart and subdivided from 1888 as the City View Estate with allotments of one to two acres facing north from “Swan’s Road”. By 1895, the land was offered again for sale as residential lots in the Taringa Park Estate. Dr Orr purchased three and a half allotments on Swann Road (then known as Swan or Swan’s Road) in 1897. Within a few months, titles were transferred to his wife, Henrietta. In 1911, four additional allotments behind Rothley, in Hill and Victoria Streets, were purchased by Henrietta Orr.

At this time, Taringa was emerging from its farming past and developing as a semi-rural Brisbane suburb. The arrival of the train line from Ipswich in 1875 and the opening of Taringa Station (initially named West Milton) made the elevated ridges of the district a popular choice for businessmen and professionals wishing to commute to the city. Early residents of note included Thomas Morrow, who established the Morrows Biscuit Factory and George Marchant, a temperance champion and philanthropist.

Dr Orr obtained his medical qualifications in Dublin in the late 1880s before immigrating to Queensland where he married Henrietta Bird in 1894. He later became the Assistant Surgeon for the Department of Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat surgery at the Brisbane General Hospital

Dr Orr commissioned the prominent firm of Hall and Dods to design his new home on Swann Road which was named ‘Rothley’. Construction cost £985 – which was a very expensive house for the time. The brick construction and terracotta roof added considerably to the building’s cost and this was probably a factor in the choice of timber of many of the firm’s other clients. Of more than 20 surviving houses designed and built by Dods in Brisbane, this is one of the few remaining of brick construction. However, two of his other early houses, ‘Lyndhurst’ (1896), London Road, Clayfield and ‘Wairuna’ (1896-98), at Highgate Hill featured some brick elements.

Robert Smith (‘Robin’) Dods and Francis Richard Hall formed their architectural partnership in 1896 after jointly winning the design competition for the new nurses’ home at the Brisbane General Hospital. Dods, thought to be the principal designer of the partnership, studied and worked in Edinburgh and London during the 1880s and 1890s where he was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement which emphasised a respect for craftsmanship and designing to suit local conditions.

Dods became particularly known for his reinterpretation of the Queensland vernacular home. His designs emphasised simplicity of detail, fine proportions and a dominant roof. His houses were designed for the climate, to allow maximum cross ventilation for the humid Brisbane climate and often featured large, occupiable verandah spaces he called ‘piazzas’ with the best climatic orientation and vertical timber louvres to provide operable enclosure. The houses were predominantly lowset to create a more immediate relationship with the landscape and had non-traditional layouts that sometimes relied entirely on verandahs for circulation. The principal rooms were connected by large doors and the house featured timber joinery extensively and artistically. Often, the houses have a service wing that is commodious and well-designed, an unusual consideration for the time, with spacious and practical kitchens, bathrooms and laundries. These elements were to have a lasting impact on domestic design in Brisbane and elsewhere in Queensland. The interwar period saw a trend towards more asymmetrical housing designs and a preference for bungalows with a closer relationship to the ground and the use of contrasting colours and materials.

Rothley has all these elements and strongly bears Dods’ signature. When built, Rothley featured a pedimented entry hall and vertical timber louvres to protect the verandah’s piazza on the western side of the house. One of

the large, front rooms has an unusual corner fireplace with a three tiered, timber mantelpiece. An attached service wing was built at the rear of the house containing the kitchen, pantries, laundry and servant's room. In 1911, four additional allotments behind Rothley in Hill and Victoria Streets were purchased in the name of Henrietta Orr.

The Orrs sold Rothley in 1920 and their advertisement in the Brisbane Courier on 6 January 1920 described the house as "a handsome brick residence with tiled roof and 2 acres" situated on "a splendid high position on the apex of a ridge, directly opposite the residence of George Marchant Esq". It went on to mention the house's hall, generous verandahs, gas and hot water, bush house and "splendid gardens".

Building cards and development approvals show that Rothley has had alterations since its construction. A shed was approved in 1954 and alterations to the dwelling approved in 1979. A development approval in 2015 included modifications to the dormer windows and the first floor layout, changes to the enclosed verandah and a new pavilion extension to the rear.

In 2016, Rothley remains a large private residence and is an early, rare and substantially intact example of Dods' domestic work. It remains on the same lot as that purchased by Dr Orr in 1897.

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## Description

Rothley is a large brick house standing in 1,991m<sup>2</sup> of landscaped grounds on the high ridge of Swann Road. The house is lowset and comprises a main core with a rear service wing. A secondary entrance is via Darvall Street to the east.

The roof of the core is a noticeably dominant pyramid roof clad with terracotta tiles, a plainly-detailed facebrick chimney. The attic has been enlarged and there has been the addition of dormer windows. The front of the house features a small gable projecting over the main entry and a hip projecting over a piazza on the northeastern corner – a broadened part of the encircling verandah. The service wing has a tiled, hip roof with a second chimney and its understorey is tall enough to accommodate a laundry.

The verandah balustrade is simple timber slats and the substantial timber posts have restrained detailing at the top. The piazza retains vertical louvres above handrail height on the eastern side. Part of the rear verandah has been enclosed.

The house has a non-traditional layout, Dods' signature, with the entrance to the house being a verandah enclosure at the north-western corner and the verandah being a primary circulation device. Wide french doors with fanlights open from the rooms onto the verandah. The principal rooms are on front with a northern aspect and are connected by large doors and the largest room has a corner fireplace which retains a timber fire surround and stepped mantle piece, another Dods characteristic element. This fireplace backs onto another smaller fireplace with original surround in the room behind, a room that also has an east facing bay window large enough to take up the entire wall. The house retains a considerable amount of original timber joinery. A narrow stair leads from a short hall up to the attic rooms.

The house is set amongst attractive landscaped gardens with several large mature trees.

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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 fine example of an elite house on generous grounds built in Swann Road in the late nineteenth century when Taringa was developing as a prestigious semi-rural suburb representative of the historical pattern of the construction of fine homes along the city's elevated ridges.

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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 rare, early and substantially intact example of the domestic architecture of RS Dods. Principal characteristics include: a dominant roof, generous verandahs including a 'piazza', low-set form with an immediate relationship with the ground, non-traditional internal layout, extensive use of timber joinery, commodious and practical service wing and restrained decorative elements.

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### Aesthetic

#### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for its fine, substantially intact design, elegant proportions and simplicity of detail as well as its generous landscaped setting with mature shade trees.

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## Technical

### CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as an early, substantially intact example of the domestic work of architect, RS Dods, whose emphasis on adapting existing traditions to suit the city's sub-tropical climate had an important impact on the development of domestic architectural design in Brisbane. Rothley demonstrates the early sophistication of Dods' designs.

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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 an early and substantially intact example of influential Brisbane architect RS Dods' domestic architecture, unusual for its brick construction and bearing Dods' hallmark design features. Dods is significant for his contribution to the development of housing design in Brisbane.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
2. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
3. Queensland Post Office Directories
4. RJ Riddel, *Robin Dods: Selected Works*. Uro Media, 2012
5. RJ Riddel, R S (Robin) Dods 1868-1920. UQ PhD thesis 2008
6. Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *Queensland Architects of the Nineteenth Century*, South Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1994
7. Dept of EHP. Entries to the QHR. Lyndhurst (601841) and Wairuna ((602823), Retrieved 16 Jun 2016.
8. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
9. *Brisbane Courier*. 18 Aug 1914
10. *Brisbane Courier*, 6 Jan 1920
11. *Brisbane Courier*, 19 Sep 1931

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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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