

Heritage Citation



antique lamp & window box adds tone to the entrance of Sir William Webb's
house at Abbotsleigh Road, Holland Park. Miss Paula Webb is on stairs.

Sir William Flood Webb's House

Key details

Addresses

At 141 Abbotsleigh Street, Holland Park, Queensland 4121; At 24 Wilbur Street,
Holland Park, Queensland 4121

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| Type of place | House |
| Period | Interwar 1919-1939 |
| Style | Arts and Crafts |
| Lot plan | L1_RP52380 |
| Key dates | Significant Development — 1939-1941 Local Heritage Place Since — 26 July 2019 Date of Citation — April 2018 |
| People/associations | Eric Percival Trewern (Architect); Sir William Flood Webb (Occupant) |
| Criterion for listing | (A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association |

This prominent masonry house was built between 1939 and 1941 for successful merchant, Oliver Kenneth McNulty and his wife Clarice. The house follows the then fashionable 'Arts and Craft' style and was designed by notable Queensland architect, E.P.Trewern. Built as part of the Stonehaven Heights estate. The house is important in demonstrating Holland Park's suburban growth when large architect designed homes were constructed on the tops of the hills by the professional classes. The house has considerable aesthetic value on a corner site opposite the Holland Park State School at the rise of the hill. From 1945 Sir William Flood Webb, eminent Supreme Court judge, resided in the house.

History

At the turn of the century, the suburb we know today as Holland Park was predominately farms. It was the extension of the tramline from Greenslopes to Holland Park in 1926 which became the catalyst for suburban development. By the late 1920s there was a post office, a hotel and a primary school.

As the large farm holdings were subdivided in the 1920s and 30s, various land estates were created in the area, including the Stonehaven Heights estate. Marketed at those with means, the estate took advantage of the high position of what was then known as Mount Pleasant and its high ridgeline which afforded views from all directions. The estate was extensively advertised in the mid to late 1930s in the Brisbane newspapers:

Stonehaven Heights, Mount Pleasant, 57 Ideal Home Sites, Amidst Delightful Surroundings and Modern Bungalows; the estate is one of Brisbane's beauty spots, and is conveniently situated ... with glorious panoramic views of the city and mountains ... right in the track of the cool summer breezes, and every modern convenience – water, electric light, gas, and telephone ¹

Stonehaven Heights estate was promoted as being close to the tramline, public school and parks. By the late

1930s the majority of lots had been sold and suburban development had transformed the estate. A series of large, architect designed homes were built on the ridgeline amongst more modest but aesthetically pleasing houses creating one of Brisbane's most sought after residential addresses.

In May 1939 Stonehaven Heights was featured in the Telegraph's 'Better Homes' section under the heading "A Colony of Character Homes". The feature highlighted the efforts made by all the property owners in the estate to ensure the aesthetics of the estate in relation to the fine houses, gardens and settings, were maintained, "the object is to encourage each home whether small or large to give atmosphere to its neighbour and therefore build to an idea".² The article described the wide range of architectural designs in the estate such as Spanish Mission and English Revival, "It is a pleasure to drive amongst these well-planned and maintained homes ... those people who own homes on Stonehaven Heights are to be congratulated".³

In 1939 Oliver Kenneth McAnulty and his wife, Clarice Dulcie McAnulty, purchased just over thirty perches of land on a prominent corner site bounded by Abbotsleigh and Wilbur streets and across the road from the Holland Park State School. Oliver McAnulty was recorded as both a cheese manufacturer at one time and a merchant another. In March 1939 McAnulty had plans approved for his new Stonehaven Heights house. He commissioned eminent Brisbane architect, E.P. Trewern to design the home.

Victorian trained Eric Percival Trewern established his Brisbane architectural practice in 1920 at an address in Queen Street, Brisbane. The practice continued until Trewern's death in 1959. The height of his design success occurred in the interwar period and he is renowned for his innovative designs incorporating the Spanish Mission and the Old English/Tudor revival style in residential and commercial architecture. Amongst his finest residential designs is the New Farm house "Santa Barbara" that is considered the best example of the Spanish Mission style in Brisbane. Trewern designed many commercial buildings in central Brisbane many of which no longer exist. One important extant building is the Inchcolm Professional Chambers on Wickham Terrace. Trewern was an active member of many prestigious architectural societies in the pursuit of improving professional architectural standards in Queensland.

Trewern's design for the McAnulty home was influenced by the English Revival style, which was very fashionable at the time and reflected the status and style of the new residents of the estate. By March 1940 the house had been completed and the design of both the exterior and interior was featured in the Sunday Mail under the headline "Furnishings Maintain Dignity of Style – New Home at Holland Park".⁴ The article goes on to describe the way the interiors have been designed to reflect the 'old English' style of the exterior, "In this new Holland Park house, which was designed by E. P. Trewern, architect, the furnishing and whole interior decoration is in keeping with the English tradition so apparent in its architectural style"⁵ The completed house made a striking contribution to the Stonehaven Heights streetscape.

The McAnulty family lived in the house for the next five years and in 1945 sold the property to Sir William Flood Webb. Webb was a highly significant figure in Australian history and made major contributions to the legal profession. In the early twentieth century he studied law at the University of Queensland and passed the bar examination in 1913. In the 1920s he was appointed as Queensland Solicitor-General and then as a Queensland Supreme Court judge and President of the Court of Industrial Arbitration. In 1940 until 1946 Webb became Chief Justice for Queensland and was appointed to several Royal Commissions. He was appointed in 1946 as a Justice of the High Court of Australia, a position he held until 1958 when he retired.

In 1943, Webb was commissioned by the Australian Government to investigate whether the Japanese military forces were carrying out atrocities and breaches of warfare. His 1944 report was presented to the government, "Summary of the Report on Japanese Atrocities and Breaches of the Rules of Warfare" and was the first of three commissions given to Webb to investigate Japanese war crimes during the war. He presented his findings in

1944 to the United Nations War Crime Commission in England.

At the end of the war Webb was appointed as the President and as Australia's member of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Described by Webb as the most "important criminal trial in all history", he was one of only nine (and later eleven) international judges appointed to the tribunal. The purpose of the tribunal was to carry out the trials of accused Japanese war criminals. Over a period of two years, twenty-eight high ranking military and political leaders were put on trial. Seven were sentenced to death and hanged on 23 December 1948, another sixteen were given life sentences in prison. As President of the tribunal, it was Sir Webb's responsibility to pronounce the sentences.

On return to Australia, Webb continued to serve as Justice of the High Court of Australia until his retirement in 1958. In 1942 he was created a Knight Bachelor and in 1954 appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1954. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Queensland in 1967 for his outstanding contribution to jurisprudence.

Throughout his time involved in the internationally important war trials, the house at 141 Abbotsleigh Street was the family home. Sir Webb moved out of the home in the late 1960s and his son, William Kevin Webb resided in the house. The property remained in the Webb family until the 1980s.

Description

Sir William Flood Webb's House is a large, two storey Inter-war Old English styled house set on a hilltop in the suburban streets of Holland Park. It is a masonry residence, with Arts and Crafts references.

Holland Park is primarily a residential area located in the green and moderate hilly south-eastern suburbs of Brisbane. Though now dominated by post-war timber houses, the early larger homes in Holland Park, such as this residence, display a variety of styles popular in the interwar period. The prominent corner position of the subject house further emphasises the strong presence of the home in the street. The elevated hilltop location provides extensive views toward the Brisbane CBD and mountains beyond, though reciprocal views to Sir William Flood Webb's House are limited by mature trees and other vegetation.

The site is a generous, corner suburban block. The residence directly addresses the street corner, with a N-W orientation, having generous setbacks from both street frontages, and nestled close to both the southern and eastern site boundaries. Surrounding the property is a modern steel fence with porphyry stone piers to the timber pedestrian and vehicular gates. Similar porphyry stone detailing is constructed in retaining walls to the western boundary, with timber screening across the top and well-maintained vegetated screens to adjacent pool fencing. Vehicle access and accommodation is restricted to the southern and eastern boundaries. A large swimming pool is located in the south west corner. Landscaping to the site is primarily border plantings and hedging, with stone garden edges and open flat grass areas to the front yard. The heavily screened street frontages include a mix of screening plants and mature trees, particularly to the western street front facing the school opposite.

The exterior walls of the house are textured, rendered brickwork with a terracotta tiled roof. It has a complex roof with a half hip to the front elevation and two half gables to the north. Dormer windows, wrap around hipped

awnings, catslide details and a rendered chimney with face brick capping, further add to the roof form. The various rooves have generous exposed eaves with timber fascia's and K-style guttering. This dominant roof form contrasts with the light coloured rendered walls and gable infills. Face brick sills to the timber-framed multi-panel casement windows are consistent throughout.

The front elevation features porphyry stonework to the face of the entry porch, under substantial stone block lintels with simple corbelling. Brick stairs lead to the feature ornate security grille, through to the timber panelled entry door. The western patio has face brick balustrading, and has been sympathetically enclosed with timber framed casement windows. Face brick subfloor detailing is evident around the building. A small Juliet balcony with simple steel balustrade, with French doors and shutters, also feature in the front gable end.

Period features of this house include the triple casement windows with diamond leadlight glazing. Faceted bay windows feature to the north elevation. The dominant and complex tiled roof forms are a very strong expression of this style, particularly coupled with the rendered masonry walls. The face brick sill and subfloor details also contribute. Large expressed lintels are found on lower level windows, albeit concrete instead of stone being used in these places. The asymmetry of the overall form is also typical of the Inter-War Old English style.

The interiors of this residence have not been inspected.

The separate double garage to the southern boundary has a parapet gable façade sympathetic to the original home, concealing a sheet metal gable roof. A dominant pyramidal tiled roof structure to the rear of the garage is also present. A large, simple, light-weight skillion metal rooved carport/ covered entertainment area with paving is connected to the eastern elevation and extends to timber posts adjacent to the eastern boundary.

Sir William Flood Webb's house appears to have retained its original form with minimal alterations. Additional car accommodation, the pool, landscaping works and covered outdoor entertaining areas appear to be the only later additions. The residence appears to be well maintained and in excellent condition.

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:

Historical

CRITERION A

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

as an architect-designed masonry house built in 1939 as part of the Stonehaven Heights estate, it is representative of Holland Park's suburban development, with houses planned in a layout and orientation to take advantage of the topography on large, elevated sites during the interwar period.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a striking, intact, 1930s masonry house designed by E. P. Trewern in the 'Old English' style and situated high on a prominent corner in Holland Park.

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 the home to Sir William Flood Webb, High Court Judge and President and Australian member of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and Chief Justice of Queensland.

References

1. *Courier Mail*, 14 November 1936
2. *Telegraph*, May 30, 1939
3. *Ibid*
4. *Sunday Mail*, 31 March 1940, p12
5. *Ibid*
6. Post Office Directories.
7. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
8. Queensland Electoral Rolls
9. Allom Lovell Marquis-Kyle, *The Character of Residential Areas, Brisbane*, A Study for the Brisbane City Council, 1994
10. Brisbane History Group, *Housing, Health, the River and the Arts*, Papers No. 3, 1985
11. Brisbane City Council Water and Sewerage Maps
12. Brisbane City Council Building Registers
13. Australian War Memorial, *Guide to the Papers of Sir William Webb*, 1946-48

14. Australian Dictionary of Biography, “Sir William Flood Webb”
 15. *Courier Mail*, 26 August 1946, p3
 16. *Daily Mercury*, 10 June 1954, p1
 17. *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 7 December 1948, p1
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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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