

Heritage Information

Please contact us for more information about this place:
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Tooroonga

Key details

Addresses	At 36 Highcrest Avenue, Wavell Heights, Queensland 4012
Type of place	House
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	California Bungalow
Lot plan	L40_RP43937; L41_RP43937
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 December 2017 Date of Information — April 2015
Construction	Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Timber
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (H) Historical association

'Tooroonga' is a War Service Home built in 1929 for returned soldier William Catchpoole. It was the first house built in Highcrest Avenue, then known as Hillcrest Avenue. The house reflects the interwar settlement of Wavell Heights, prior to its development by the Queensland Housing Commission.

History

This site was part of Portion 581 in the Parish of Kedron, which was granted to Arthur Robinson in 1866 for £5 and 3 shillings. The following year the land passed to Reginald Baptist, and then to members of the Baptist

family after his death. The area of the land purchase was originally known as the German Station because of the German missionaries who established a mission for Aborigines at Zion's Hill (now Toombul) in 1838. This mission closed in 1849 but many German families established farms on the surrounding land. The German Station changed its name to Nundah after the opening of the Nundah railway station, on the Sandgate rail line, in 1882. As a result, the area around Cocks (later renamed Rode) Road became known as West Nundah. It was a hilly area used principally for grazing cattle for the local slaughteryards operated by people such as Tom Cocks and the Pfingst family, whose farm was on Portion 580, adjacent to this one.

The opening of the railway line encouraged more people to settle in the Nundah district. West Nundah, however, remained too far from the station for residential development. In 1890 WJ Hooker offered for sale three portions, including portion 581, each being 9 acres and 24 perches. Although the portions were described as eligible building sites, suitable for gentlemen's villa residences, portion 581 was not sold until 1898. It remained undeveloped even longer, as it was purchased and sold by numerous proprietors in the early twentieth century. In 1916 it was subdivided but passed intact, still undeveloped, to William Gibson and the Queensland Trustees Limited in 1922. A road was run through the site in 1927, and the first sales of house-sized subdivisions occurred in 1928.

Population growth in West Nundah after World War I was prompted by returning soldiers, who moved into new estates such as the *Rode Heights Estate*, Shaw's Estate, Westwood Estate and Glenora Park Estate. One such soldier was William Herbert Roger Catchpoole, who had enlisted in 1916 at the age of 27. On returning to Australia in 1919 he resumed his occupation as a joiner. He resided at the family's Sandgate residence until his marriage in 1928. Later that year, he purchased two subdivisions of Portion 581, an elevated site of one rood and 8.2 perches. A house was approved for the site in September.

Funding for Catchpoole's house was provided by the War Service Homes Commissioner. As a result of the 1918 War Service Homes Act, in June 1919 the Commissioner signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Bank, whereby the bank would act as the agent of the WSHC in purchasing land, and building homes for returned World War I soldiers. It was expected that 1500 homes a year would be required in Queensland, and the bank was instructed to purchase the necessary land, with each allotment to be 32 perches. However, between August 1919 and November 1920, only 464 houses were built. The Fourth Progress Report of the WSHC (QLD), printed 5th December 1921, complained that this meant that most of the land purchased remained idle.

There were also complaints that the houses were too expensive for veterans, and some suggested they be allowed to pick their own designs and locations, or be allowed to buy existing homes. Unemployment, the need to follow seasonal work, and sickness meant that some tenants of WSHC houses could not keep up payments and had to abandon the properties, leading to a high rate of vacancies. For example, the Fourth Progress Report of the WSHC noted that of 16 homes in Bundaberg, only 2 had been taken up by soldiers, 5 were let, and 9 were vacant.

By 1925 the regulations surrounding the War Service Home Act had been altered. Addressing many of the suggestions, houses could now be constructed on land owned by the veteran, and the applicant was allowed to either design his own house or choose from the extensive list of designs already available. Funding was also changed. The soldiers were granted an advance of £800 and paid additional costs out of pocket. The new regulations boosted the uptake of the scheme, and by 1928, 2,700 war service homes had been constructed in Queensland.

Catchpoole's house was an example of the amended operation of the Act. He had selected and purchased the site himself. He appears to have chosen the design, a double gable California bungalow style house, from the

available plans. The timber house was estimated to cost £1,033, not the most expensive of the War Service Homes but certainly requiring a contribution from Catchpoole himself. Contractor JE Timmins, an experienced builder of war service and workers' homes, was engaged to build the house.

In 1929 Catchpoole and his wife occupied the house, which they named 'Tooroonga'. They were the first residents on the street, then known as Hillcrest Avenue. Despite the opening up of land in the area for sale, the district remained sparsely populated, and in 1936 the *Courier Mail* questioned the 'inexplicable neglect' of the northern suburbs. Though removed from the central business district, the topography made the area:

...highly desirable for the family man, who wishes to set up his own home on an inexpensive scale, in a healthful locality which mostly is high and dry, where the civic sense of the people is highly developed, and where there are no inherently ugly features in the countryside.¹

The elevated Hillcrest Avenue fit the description particularly well, and was highlighted in the article. Although the distance from Nundah station was a drawback, the heights of the avenue 'tempt[ed] the wayfarer' with views south to Hamilton and the city. Development continued slowly, however, and by 1939, Hillcrest Avenue contained only three houses, with a new house on Pfingst's farmland occupying one side of the avenue and Frank Jolly's house alongside Catchpoole's on the other side.

Significant growth followed a decision to mark West Nundah as an ideal suburb for development in the postwar period. The suburb was renamed Wavell Heights in 1941, providing clarity for the Hillcrest Avenue residents, who had variously considered the avenue part of Kedron, West Nundah, and Chermside. Modern Queensland Housing Commission homes were planned for wide streets of Wavell Heights, including the Pfingst property opposite 'Tooroonga'. Hillcrest Avenue boomed in the late 1940s, growing from a quiet avenue with a handful of residences in 1946, to a well-populated one with a house on almost every subdivision on the south side in 1950. Most of the new houses were constructed on 24-perch subdivisions (approx. 610m²); the Catchpooles, with the luxury of their early purchase, had one of the few large sites (approx. 1220m²) on the avenue. 'Tooroonga' was constructed across the two subdivisions.

Services, including schools, churches and transport were provided for the residents of Wavell Heights from the 1950s. By 1963 residential development had extended to the north side of Hillcrest Avenue, which was renamed Highcrest Avenue.

The Catchpoole family retained 'Tooroonga' until 1976. Additions were made for subsequent tenants and owners in 1977 and 1982.

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 a War Service Home built during the period of the initial development of subdivisions in Wavell Heights when alterations to the War Service Homes Act boosted the uptake of the scheme before the onset of the Great Depression.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as a good example of a Californian Bungalow War Service Home that is quite original in form, layout and detailing.

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 War Service Home built in the early period of the government housing scheme's establishment as a major contributor to Brisbane's interwar development.

References

1. *The Courier Mail*, Wednesday 8 April 1936 p22
2. Australian Electoral Rolls, 1903-1972
3. Brisbane City Council aerial photographs, 1946, 2012
4. Brisbane City Council Building Register 1928
5. Brisbane City Council, Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plans 1950
6. Brisbane City Council, Properties on the Web, Building Cards

7. Brisbane City Council City Architecture and Heritage Team, citations
8. Department of Natural Resources. Queensland Certificates of Title
9. *The Brisbane Courier, The Courier Mail, The Queenslander, The Sunday Mail* - National Library of Australia Digitalised newspapers online <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
10. National Archives of Australia, WWI records, William Herbert Roger Catchpoole
11. Queensland Places: Wavell Heights (website)
12. Queensland Post Office Directories, 1868-1940
13. Street directories, 1916-1943

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Note: This information 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 information 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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