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# Carn Brae



Hawthorn Heritage study  
1992



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## Location

5 Harcourt Street HAWTHORN, Boroondara City

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO235

## Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Significance of Individual Property

1. "Carn Brea" was developed by the Beswicke family as a city mansion in a garden setting in the mid-1870s and extended in the late 1920s from the designs of architect, Harry Norris, for the Nicholas family. It has historical significance as a grand Victorian villa residence sympathetically redesigned and extended in 1920-28, and is largely intact from this period. It contributes to Harcourt Street, a precinct of intact late 19th and early 20th century

mansions and villas without parallel in Melbourne. It has important associations with the Beswicke family, and most particularly with John Beswicke, who became Hawthorn's leading 19th century architect, being the first of the row of grand houses in garden settings designed by Beswicke on elevated sites on the north side of Harcourt Street.

2. From the 1920s, the property had, significant links with the Nicholas family, prominent in Melbourne's commercial world and noted philanthropists. "Carn Brea" forms a complement to the hill station properties of Alfred Nicholas ("Burnham Beeches") and his brother, George Nicholas ("Alton", Mt. Macedon). It is important, also, for its links with the significant client/architect relationship which developed between Alfred Nicholas and Harry Norris, and the collection of architecturally and historically important domestic, institutional and commercial commissions that followed as a result of the patronage.

3. The garden setting of "Carn Brea" is of special significance and includes a collection of trees characteristic of late 19th century Victorian gardens. The retention of garden elements and buildings is of importance and includes a timber pergola and fernery (described by Peter Watts as one of the largest in the state), conservatory, fountain, sundial, tennis court, front fence and gardens. This significance is enhanced by the fact that architect, Harry Norris, was responsible for the redesign of both house and garden and that his plans (especially those dating from 1920 and 1928) have survived and provide documentation for the extant house and garden.

4. Architecturally significant for the substantially intact 1920s interior. Important spaces include; the ballroom and billiard room with their panelled hall approach, to a lesser extent the two principal living rooms adjoining the hall, the kitchen, the south facing first floor rooms, two bathrooms and the conservatory.

HO151 Harcourt Street Precinct, Hawthorn

The Harcourt Street Precinct, Hawthorn, is an area of heritage significance for the following reasons:

-Harcourt Street features a concentration of nineteenth century mansions of a high level of design, a number of which retain expansive grounds.

-The mansion houses are interspersed with series of distinctive and substantial Federation designs, and interwar houses in Tudor and related modes.

-The southern part of the precinct is notable for smaller middle class houses on Rathmines Road, Auburn Road, some with miniature arched tower-form porches of a type occasionally seen in Canterbury and Kew. These are accompanied by broad single-fronted, single-storey verandahed Italianate middle-class housing in Bayview Avenue and Molesworth Street. This stock is largely intact, usually with stonepatterned timber facades or polychrome brickwork, often with mature gardens and sometimes with original fencing.

-The mansion designs by the noted architect John Beswicke, in an Italianate mode that complemented his designs for Hawthorn and Camberwell Town Halls and the Glenferrie and Auburn shopping centres. The south and west end has similarly vigorous and distinctive designs by a later generation of architects, as well as the Auburn Primary School at 51 Rathmines Road, built in stages from 1890.

-The character of the area is enhanced and rendered distinctive by broad kerbside lawns and mature street trees, arching over Harcourt Street and Higham Road within the precinct boundaries. The William Angliss Reserve, adjacent to the precinct at its east end, visibly separates the precinct from neighbouring areas and reinforces its garden character.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Boroondara - Hawthorn Heritage study 1992, Meredith Gould, Conservation Architects, 1992;
Architect/Designer	Beswicke, John,
Other Names	Carn Brea,
Hermes Number	14862

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

A brick and render Californian bungalow in mansion house guise, modelled out of a grand Victorian Mansion house. Norris added new rooms across the whole of the frontage of the Beswicke building, adopting a single storey with attic storey form, rather than the two storey form of the then existing building. Gables were applied to the old building and the interior completely gutted and remodelled.

A conservatory was added to the side incorporating a perplexing low pitched roof. The upper floor rooms gain light from unequally spaced dormers. At least one of these has been altered by lowering the sill. On the west side of the house an extensive grotto and pergola fernery was added. Norris also effected designs for garden pergolas and the long pergola along the service entrance.

See separate P.I.F. for the garden.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*