
Reumah



1 Reumah Court, Balwyn



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Location

1 Reumah Court BALWYN, BOROONDARA CITY

Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO871

Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 7, 2021

What is Significant?

'Reumah', 1 Reumah Court, Balwyn, originally constructed in 1908-9, and then partly rebuilt after being struck by lightning in 1919, is significant.

The remnant garden setting, including several mature deciduous trees, is also significant.

The capped timber picket fence, brick drive piers and mild steel drive gates are all recent additions and not significant.

How is it significant?

'Reumah' is of local architectural (representative) significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

'Reumah' at 1 Reumah Court, Balwyn is a substantial and largely intact Federation house whose massing and details are largely a fine example of the style. It is a well-designed and carefully detailed example and bears similarities to the work of pre-eminent architects of that time, particularly Ussher and Kemp and their hipped genre which has been identified as a distinctive Melbourne Queen Anne (or Federation) style. Other similar details repeated across much of Ussher and Kemp's work and other fine houses of the period include dominant brick and roughcast chimneys with raised brick drops and paired chimney pots, broad fronted canted bays with distinctive joinery details and verandahs with heavy timber posts. Unusually, the roof is tiled in terracotta shingles rather than the typical Marseille patterned tile, though this likely occurred with the work associated with rebuilding following a fire in 1919. (Criterion D)

Heritage Study/Consultant Balwyn Heritage Study Peer Review Stage 2, Context, 2020;

Construction dates 1908, 1919,

Hermes Number 207065

Property Number

Physical Description 1

'Reumah' at 1 Reumah Court, Balwyn, is a substantial single-storey brick Federation dwelling originally built in 1909. In 1919 it was struck by lightning. Whilst exact details of the extent of the damage is unknown, a newspaper article reporting the fire at the time notes that the house was two storeys in sections and that whilst being left as a shell, portions of the original building had survived. Certainly the form of its chimneys suggests that they survive from the 1909 house, at minimum. Positioned on the south side of Reumah Court, the residence sits within an established garden of mature trees on an irregular allotment that falls north to south. Constructed in brick (now overpainted) and roughcast render, the house, which originally faced Mont Albert Road and Knutsford Street, is entered off a curved gravel drive along its eastern boundary.

'Reumah' is set under a high-pitched terra-cotta shingle roof that combines both hip and gable elements and is dominated by six tall corbelled and ribbed chimneys each surmounted by a pair of terracotta chimney pots. Whilst the house is asymmetrical in plan, the current street-facing northern elevation is largely symmetrical in layout. A verandah sits under the sweep of the broken back hipped roof and incorporates a centrally placed hip-roofed canted bay. The verandah is supported by substantial turned timber posts, paired at its ends. The upper third of each post is square edged indicating that a deep timber frieze, common for the period, has been removed. The simple timber slatted balustrade is likely to be a later addition. Whilst this is now the primary elevation of the house it was originally at the rear of the property and it is unknown to what extent it has been altered.

The east (originally facing Knutsford Street) and south (originally facing Mont Albert Road) elevations are the primary and most detailed elevations of the residence. Comprising a complex interplay of steep half-timbered gable ends, hip roofed bay windows, and a small entry porch nestled under the main roof line, these elevations would have most likely been originally viewed from the corner of Mont Albert Road and Knutsford Street and designed to be read as a single cohesive facade. Along the eastern elevation a recessed porch is set behind a deep arched fretted screen. This sits alongside a substantial canted bay with double hung sash windows with

multipaned upper sashes. This bay is repeated along the southern elevation. The detail of these elevations are similar to those to at 5 Willsmere Road, Kew 1903(HO139).

The western elevation, whilst more utilitarian, still demonstrates an unusual attention to detail for a minor elevation with original fenestration and a recessed verandah under the main roof line. A west projecting service wing sits under a gable roof and was partially demolished when the property was subdivided to create Reumah Court.

The house appears largely intact, however, its original setting has been much encroached upon by the surrounding development. Several tall deciduous trees enhance the remaining established garden setting and appear early. The capped timber picket fence, brick drive piers and mild steel drive gates are recent additions.

During a site inspection undertaken in December 2018 it was noted that the eastern, southern and western elevations of the property display a high level of integrity and intactness, and it is likely that the house retains a great deal of its 1908-09 fabric. While all elevations of the house were inspected up close, the current owners did not wish any photos to be taken.

While news reports note that 'Reumah' was partly two-storey prior to the 1919 fire, the elegant lines of its current roof form are entirely in keeping with a house of 1909, and appear to have remained unaltered after the 1919 fire apart from the recladding in terracotta shingles. Due to this, it is likely that the two-storey section of the house was the rear service wing on the west side of the house. As Miles Lewis notes, there are early examples of Federation-era houses whose steep spires were originally clad in terracotta shingles, while the rest of the roof was covered in the thicker Marseille tiles. He cites an 1898 example in South Australia (Lewis nd 6.07 footnote 31), with another example at 150 Mont Albert Road, Canterbury (HO224), also of 1898. An earlier example is Rippon Lea, whose original (pre-1880) roof cladding was two patterns of terracotta shingles (rectangular and scalloped) in a diaper pattern. This roof covering was reinstated in 2012. For the most part, however, Lewis notes, the flat terracotta shingle was produced in Australia by 1910 and became popular in the 1920s (Lewis nd 6.06). The form of the terracotta shingles and associated ridge cappings seen on 'Reumah' appear to be in keeping with the variety used in the interwar period, which corresponds with the necessity for extensive roof repairs after the 1919 fire.

The integrity of the place is enhanced by the high level of intactness of these main elements that include the chimneys and chimney pots, terracotta shingled roof, eaves and gable end detailing, verandahs, door and window joinery.

The integrity of the place is diminished by the subdivision of the site which has both restricted public views to and from its principal elevations, though it still retains a relatively substantial garden setting.

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/>