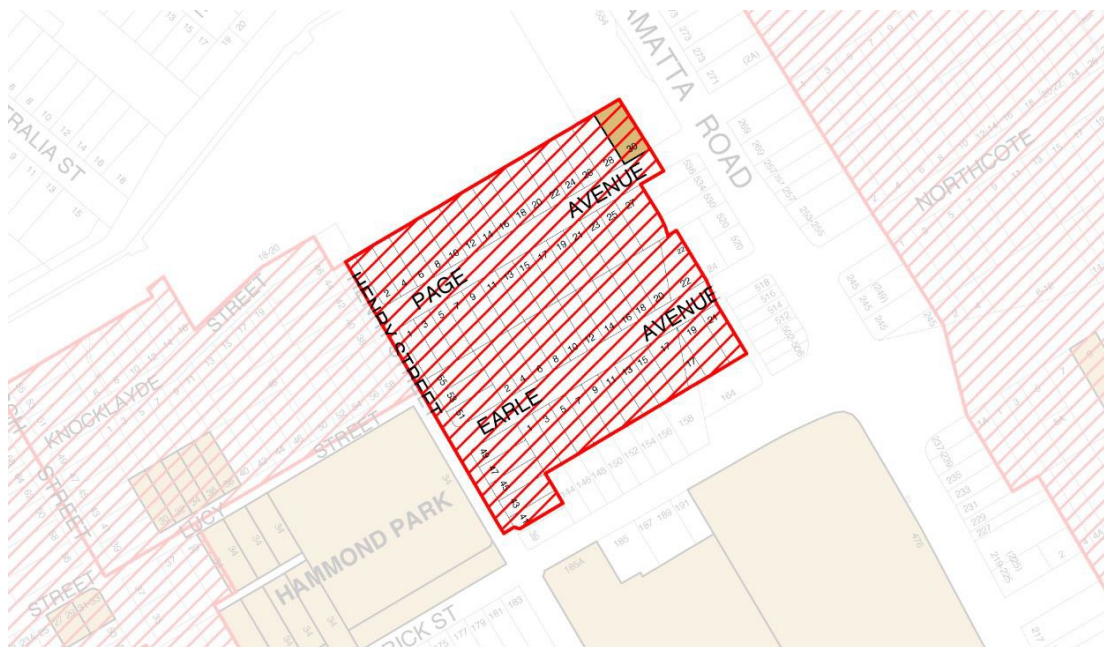


## C37 The Ranch, Ashfield

### Heritage Conservation Area



#### KEY PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1923 to 1930s

##### HCA TYPE 2: SINGLE STOREY RESIDENTIAL (i) uniform single period subdivision Statement of Significance

The Ranch Heritage Conservation Area is of *local* heritage significance.

The area is of *historical* significance as the development of a 1923 subdivision of the earlier Victorian period Ashfield Vale House aka The Ranch estate, with streets named for Sir Earle Christmas Page (1880-1961), prominent politician and surgeon, leader of the federal Country Party from 1921 and briefly Prime Minister in 1939.

The area is of *aesthetic* significance for its wide streets, regular subdivision pattern developed with single storey detached Inter-war California Bungalow style houses and a single 2-storey Inter-war Art Deco style residential flat building, which demonstrate the discrete historical period of the area's development.

## Key Character Elements

Subdivision and public domain elements:

- Relatively wide street carriageways
- Subdivision pattern of regular rectilinear allotments

Elements that contribute to the consistency of the streetscape (visible from the public domain)

- Detached face brick single storey housing Inter-war California bungalow style
- 2-storey Inter War Art Deco residential flat building (No. 30 Page Avenue)
- Original details such as:
  - Front verandahs with original detailing
  - Original roof forms with original cladding of unglazed terracotta tiles
    - Gable ends facing the street with imitation half-timbered and timber shingled finishes
    - Face brickwork walls
    - Original timber-framed windows and timber panelled doors consistent with the periods and styles of houses
- Original front fences - low brick in brickwork to match the house
- Narrow driveways with garages to the rear or carports to the side of houses

## NON-CONTRIBUTORY ELEMENTS

Recent or heavily altered houses with difficult to reverse uncharacteristic alterations (examples 20 Earle Avenue, 1 and 23 Page Avenue)

Uncharacteristic first floor additions to single storey houses which are visible from the street (examples)

Changes to materials: Cement rendering of face brickwork (examples 3, 5, 19 Earle Avenue); modern roof cladding (eg concrete tiles) and loss of chimneys

Front verandah enclosures (examples 3, 5, 7, 15, 21 Earle Avenue)

Changes to windows (examples aluminium framed windows at 12, 20, 22 Page Avenue)

Modern front fences of unsympathetic design and materials, particularly high solid masonry front fences.

Carports in front of house (Example No. 20 Page Avenue)



## Historical Development

The subdivision described as 'The Ranch', a 10-acre area subdivided into 'choice bungalow sites and valuable business positions', was offered for sale by auction on 17 March 1923. The agents were Richardson & Wrench and the terms included a Building covenant to protect buyers.<sup>1</sup>

The land was part of a grant made to Augustus Alt in 1810, which was later absorbed into Joseph Underwood's Ashfield Park Estate.<sup>2</sup> Following the death of Underwood's daughter Elizabeth in 1858, the 10 and a half-acre piece of the estate roughly bounded by the Great Western Highway, Iron Cove Creek, Frederick Street and Henry Street was purchased by Robert Murray, whose firm Robert Murray & Co was a well-known city grocery business. Here Murray started building his 'handsome villa residence'. Surprisingly, the property was advertised for sale in January 1861, before the house had been completed.

The property was bought by Dr Thomas Haylock, who completed the residence and named it 'Ashfield Vale'. The main entrance was from Parramatta Road, along a drive which crossed the creek. Haylock also bought more land, increasing his frontage along Parramatta Road and enlarging the estate to 16 and a half acres.<sup>3</sup>

In 1877 Haylock sold the property to Alfred Watt, for £2,500, and it was Watt who proposed the subdivision of the Ashfield Vale Estate. He employed Ferdinand Reuss, the eminent surveyor and architect, to produce the subdivision plan in 1880 and this arrangement appeared on the Higinbotham & Robinson map of Ashfield which was published in 1883. It shows 'Ashfield Vale House' on a block retaining its frontage to Parramatta Road, and the remaining land subdivided into 100 allotments fronting Henry Street, Frederick Street and four new internal streets.

As far as is known there was only one sale, the rest of the estate being purchased by Thomas Macgregor, who later bought back that single lot and did not go ahead with the subdivision. Macgregor and his brother Charles operated a large wholesale grocery and wine and spirit business in George Street, Sydney. Thomas's widowed mother Robina Macgregor lived in 'Ashfield Vale House' until her death in 1886. About that time Thomas MacGregor had financial trouble which forced him to sell his properties. 'Ashfield Vale' was offered for auction sale in 1887, but no new owner is known until it was registered in 1891 in the name of Michael McMahon, who was an alderman of Petersham and had been mayor in 1880-81. McMahon did not live in Ashfield but leased 'Ashfield Vale House' to the Salvation Army. Here the Salvation Army established the Prison Gate Brigade Home, an institution for the rehabilitation of released prisoners and their return to ordinary life.

Earlier documents showed the footprint of the 'Ashfield Vale House' residence and its outbuildings, but the first image of the form of the house appeared during its occupation by the Salvation Army. It was a single-storey building, rectangular in plan and with a hipped roof from which projected the dormer windows of the attic rooms. Two single-storey wings extended westwards and there were several outbuildings, underground water tanks and a water hole. The house had accommodation for 30 men and the land around it was cultivated as a farm during its Salvation Army period. The Salvation Army operated the Home in Ashfield for only a little over two years, though staff members lived there for a time afterwards.<sup>4</sup>

Another tenant, R J Rixon, occupied the house in 1898 and it appears that it was he who renamed the property 'The Ranch'. The next tenant was Thomas West, of Five Dock, who leased the property from 1901. West had been a contractor, quarry owner, brickmaker, alderman, mayor and trotting and racehorse owner and it is likely that he decided that 'The Ranch' was an ideal place where he could spend his retirement indulging in his lifetime interest in horses and all the activities associated with them. By the time West came to occupy 'The Ranch', Iron Cove and Underwood Creeks would have been channeled, the land leveled and the waterholes filled, enabling him to make use of the full 16 acres. He added stable buildings near the house.

<sup>1</sup> Subdivision Plan No 118/89, in the collection of Ashfield & District Historical Society. It is also reproduced in the ADHS Journal No 13, June 2000, p 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ashfield Heritage Study 1992, vol 1, pp 32, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Most of the historical data in these and the next few paragraphs come from Nora Peek, 'Ashfield Vale House', in the ADHS Journal, No 13, pp 29 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Pratten, 'The Salvation Army Prison Gate Brigade Home, Ashfield', in the ADHS Journal, No 13, pp 37 et seq.



The McMahon family sold the property in 1908 to Kezia Miller, the wife of a butcher, who paid £1,700 for it. She purchased the remaining blocks along Frederick Street that had not been part of the earlier estate. The lessee Thomas West died in 1912 and by 1913 the tenant was Mrs Amy Laws, who lived there with her family until 1916, to be followed by Edward Riggs and his family, who were tenants until 1919.

In 1919 Kezia Miller, by then a widow, sold the western section of the estate, just over six acres bordering Iron Cove Creek, to Australian Motors, for £3,200. In that year a building application was approved for the erection of two large workshops, where, soon afterwards, the assembly of the Australian Six motor car began. Eventually most of this land and the workshops were sold to Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited and the famous AWA factory operated there from 1931 until the early 1990s. In 1998-99 the home units that now cover part of that site were erected.<sup>5</sup>

The residual ten-acre site of 'The Ranch' was acquired by Percy Miller, a Leichhardt butcher, who rented the old house to Augustus Covell and his wife Lena.

On 28 August 1922 the property was transferred to Frederick Lane, solicitor, Ralph King, accountant and Hubert Moss, dentist, all of Sydney. The developers created the subdivision called The Ranch Estate, which included Page and Earle Avenues, serving 89 allotments. On one of these, just west of the Underwood Creek (which by then had been formed as a brick stormwater channel) 'Ashfield Vale House' still stood, its site very curtailed. It is not known when "Ashfield Vale House" aka "The Ranch" was demolished, but it must have been after the 1923 auction.

Afterwards that site was subdivided into the allotments that are now Nos 20-28 Page Avenue.

On the allotments facing Parramatta Road commercial premises were built. The area facing Henry Street between Earle Avenue and Frederick Street, which was not part of the 1923 subdivision, was subdivided into six residential sites.

All the residential sites were built on fairly quickly. Earle and Page Avenues first appear in Sands Directory in 1925, in which year nine houses were recorded in Earle Avenue (Sands called it 'Earl's Avenue') and 10 houses were recorded in Page Avenue, indicating that these buildings had been erected in 1924. A year later there were 23 houses in Page Avenue. Only one allotment contains a building not erected for a single-family, being the block of flats now on No 30 Page Avenue, which was erected in 1941.

The reason for the naming of the internal streets after Sir Earle Christmas Page (1880-1961), prominent politician and surgeon, who was instrumental in the removal of Billy Hughes as Prime Minister in 1922, is not known, however may be due to his wife Ethel Esther nee Blunt's connections to the Ashfield area. Ethel met Page in 1902 while she was a nurse at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Newtown, and after a long courtship, the couple married at Ashfield on 18 September 1906. Dr Earle Page was leader of the federal Country Party from 1921 and Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer from 1923 to 1929. He became PM in 1939, for the very short period of 19 days.<sup>6</sup> He was later knighted.

<sup>5</sup> Ann O'Connell, 'Ashfield's Australian Six', in the ADHS Journal, No 13, pp 1 et seq.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Costar & Peter Vlahos, 'Sir Earle Page', in Michelle Grattan, ed, Australian Prime Ministers (New Holland Press, 2000), p 168 et seq.





Above: "The Ranch" subdivision of 1923. Source: NSW State Library

## BUILDING RANKING DEFINITIONS

Building ranking No.	Building Ranking Definition
*	Heritage items: Buildings individually listed as heritage items in the LEP
1	Contributory 1: Buildings that clearly reflect the Key period of Significance for the HCA and are key elements of the character of the HCA
2	Contributory 2: Buildings that have been altered but are still identifiable as dating from the Key period of Significance for the HCA. They retain their overall form from the original date of construction and, even though altered, are contributory to the HCA character
3	Neutral: Buildings that are either heavily altered to an extent where the construction period is uncertain, or are from a construction period which falls outside the Key Period of Significance for the HCA, but which reflect the predominant scale and form of other buildings within the HCA, and therefore do not detract from the character of the HCA
4	Detracting: Buildings from a construction period which falls outside the Key Period of Significance for the HCA that have scale or form that is not consistent with the key characteristics of the area



## The Ranch

Street	Side	No	Rating	Name	Style/Observations
Earle Avenue	N	2	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	4	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	6	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	8	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	10	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	12	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	14	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	16	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	18	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	N	20	3		
Earle Avenue	N	22	1		California Bungalow/Art Deco
Earle Avenue	S	21	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	19	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	17	1		Arts-&-Crafts Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	15	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	13	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	11	1		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	9	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	7	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	5	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	3	2		California Bungalow
Earle Avenue	S	1	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	55	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	53	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	51	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	49	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	47	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	45	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	43	1		California Bungalow
Henry Street	E	41	1		California Bungalow



Street	Side	No	Rating	Name	Style/Observations
Page Avenue	N	2	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	4	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	6	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	8	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	10	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	12	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	14	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	16	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	18	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	20	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	22	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	24	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	26	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	28	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	N	30	*		Art Deco
Page Avenue	S	27	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	25	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	23	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	21	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	19	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	17	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	15	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	13	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	11	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	9	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	7	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	5	1		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	3	2		California Bungalow
Page Avenue	S	1	3		

