

Ashfield Heritage Study Review of Areas Zoned 2(a)

Current Use House, 'Strathdon', 23 John Street, Ashfield	Reference N° 2 10 08
Heritage Listing Recommended	
Themes : Local Subdivision and consolidation Boom years	Themes : State Towns, suburbs and villages
<p>Historical Notes</p> <p>This site was part of Joseph Underwood's Ashfield Park Estate, having been earlier a small portion of Augustus Alt's 1810 grant. William Muir purchased a piece of Underwood's land, on which he built the house 'Taringa' in about 1865. Then in 1880 Muir subdivided the land around 'Taringa' into 23 allotments. This lot, No 15, was bought by Elizabeth Lyttle, and on it she had the house 'Strathdon' erected. It has been speculated that it was designed by Ferdinand Reuss, the architect-surveyor commissioned by Muir to plan the 'Taringa' subdivision.(1) Its distinctive style lends some credibility to this association.</p> <p>The earliest mention of the house in the Ashfield Council Rate Book is in 1883. It was then recorded as a six-room single storey brick house, with a slate roof, owned and occupied by Miss Elizabeth Little (sic).(2) In the following years its ownership and occupancy changed many times. William T Sharp, a music teacher, occupied the house from 1889 to 1894 and its name 'Strathdon' first appeared in 1890.(3) The first indication of a valuation was in 1909, viz, £120 unimproved and £610 improved. The owner and occupier was Mrs Annie Smith, who lived there from 1898 until 1928.(4) In that year Mrs Smith sold the property to Simon Hickey for £1,500. Its valuation was given as £720 unimproved and £1,300 improved.(5)</p>	
<p>Physical Description</p> <p>A single-storeyed double-fronted brick and stucco house with a symmetrical facade in the Victorian Regency style of architecture. The basework is sandstone and the facade is lined to simulate ashlar. The house has a hipped gable roof with the ridge parallel to the street. The gable bargeboards are fretworked in a curvilinear pattern and the roof (presumably originally slates) has been re-covered in concrete tiles. There is a simple corniced chimney at each end of the ridge. The front verandah, raised a little above garden level, runs across the front in three bays and is extended on the left as a narrower fourth bay and down part of the side of the house. It has a cast iron lace ensemble of plate columns, a narrow fringe with centre droplets, brackets, and balcony panels of a design registered in New South Wales by A T Rees & Co, iron founders, in 1883.(6) The balustrading has a gate in the centre bay. The verandah roof is a shallow concave form in corrugated metal. The front windows have round-arch heads and double-hung sashes. A path of tessellated tiles leads to the verandah steps. The garden is simple and the front fence, which returns for a short distance around the corner, is of pickets. The front gate is a robust and appropriate recent construction.</p> <p>The several modifications include the replacement of the roof.</p>	
<p>Information Sources</p> <p>(1) Nora Peek, 'William Muir's "Taringa Estate"', in Ashfield & District Historical Society <i>Journal</i>, No 1, March 1982. (2) Rate Book, North Ward, 1883, No 254, in Ashfield Council Archives. (3) <i>Sands Directories</i>; Rate Books, <i>ibid</i>, 1885, No 252; 1887, No 268; 1892, No 244; 1896, No 246. (4) Rate Book, <i>ibid</i>, 1907, No 299; <i>Sands Directories</i>. (5) Valuer-general's records, North Ward, 1928, No 1738, in Ashfield Council Archives. (6) Brian Turner, <i>Australia's Iron Lace</i> (Allen & Unwin, 1985) p 178.</p>	