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Briarcliffe

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Briarcliffe, Great Western Hwy, Glenbrook, NSW

Photographs: None

List: Register of the National Estate

Class: Historic

Legal Status: [Indicative Place](#)

Place ID: 103398

Place File No: 1/14/006/0058

Nominator`s Statement of Significance:

Briarcliffe is significant as the residence of the RAAF Air Commander since 1954.

The residence has aesthetic significance largely related to its setting in an expansive, terraced mature garden.

The aesthetic significance of the house has been compromised through later additions.

The stone walls of the house are unusual in that the lifting claw holes have been left on the exposed face.

The residence has been extensively altered and refurbished, yet some of the original internal joinery and ceilings have been retained.

The residence is of local significance only. Further investigation of the gardens may

establish a high level of significance for them.

Official Values: Not Available

Description:

`Briarcliffe`, located adjacent to the Royal Australian Air Force`s Air Headquarters in the Blue Mountains is the official residence of the Air Commander Australia. It was purchased by the RAAF in 1953 for the first Air Officer Commanding Eastern Area Command, Air Vice Marshal J. P. McCauley CB, CBE and has been occupied ever since by successive Air Officers Commanding and later Air Commanders. It was originally part of the larger property known as `Logie`. The Air Headquarters Officers` Mess now occupies what was once the Lapstone Hill Hotel built in 1928 and sold to the RAAF in 1949.

Logie had been built in the 1870s for the Hon John Lucas MLA. Below Logie still stands the old railway station, Lucasville, named after him and which formed part of the Lapstone Zig Zag. Later Logie became the home of Captain Charles Smith who was succeeded by his son Colin. Colin Smith was a bacteriologist of some repute and a rather colourful eccentric who drove Stanley Steamers and shot flies off the walls with a pistol. In 1921 H.G. Kirkpatrick purchased Logie and adjacent land from Colin Smith. Kirkpatrick was an architect and entrepreneur in the early 1920s and erected a large two storey hotel adjoining Logie House (the buildings survive today). During the Great Depression of the 1920s Kirkpatrick was forced to sell off the southern half of the Logie property. The land was sold to his cousin GHD Morris.

Morris designed Briarcliffe and named it after his home in England. The house was designed to take advantage of the expansive views to the north and east. The house was built by John Coliquhoun Dunn of Glenbrook and his son James JC Dunn. Upon completion, the house attracted a lot of interest due to the unorthodox flat roof design. The roof was originally covered with a sand textured bituminous material (similar to maltoid).

The date of construction is unclear. The references letter states 1921 but this is unlikely as Kirkpatrick only purchased Logie in 1920 and did not sell the southern portion until during the Great Depression (1929- 1934). It is more likely therefore that Briarcliffe was erected in 1931.

The stone for the walls was quarried at a site on the north side of the western railway which runs below the site on its northern boundary. The blocks were carted from the quarry by horse and dray. The carter was MC Cann of Emu Plains. They were hand winched into position and the pits for the claws on the grab can still be seen on each block .

A feature of the original house was a large room across the north eastern half of the house. The room was known as the `Great Room` due to its size and proportions. The room was also known irreverently as the chocolate box due to its original decor being papering in broad royal blue and gold vertical stripes. The name referred to the popular 1920s `01d Gold` Chocolates which were presented in a gold and blue striped box .

At some time during the 1930s the property was sold to a Professor Irvine who allowed the gardens to revert to bushlands.

Late in the 1930s, when Briarcliffe was owned by A. H. Poolman, he personally

terraced seven acres of garden, evidence of which can still be seen around Briarcliffe and below the lower fence along with traces of the former Cox's road. Poolman also erected a seven foot high corrugated iron fence along the west and east boundaries to protect him from disapproving stares occasioned by his preference to work in shorts with no shirt.

Poolman sold Briarcliffe to the Millingen family who lived there until its sale to the Commonwealth in 1953.

It was the 'Great Room', which changed most during the major renovations undertaken by the Defence Housing Authority during 1993 after 40 years of RAAF occupation. In order to create a dining-room where a small bedroom had been walls were moved so that the fire-place was centrally located in the now smaller 'Great Room'. The near-flat original malthoid roof was removed(?) and replaced with a pitched roof and dormer windows allowing two upstairs bedrooms to be created.

The sun-room was completely rebuilt after new foundations were poured, higher ceilings were installed throughout the house and a stairway created. The renovations and alterations were designed by G.J. Taylor, Architect, constructed by S.J. Ward, Builder, and supervised by the Authority's regional manager, Mr John Heath.

Briarcliffe is a spacious residence containing habitable rooms on the ground floor, roof space and service rooms in the void space below the ground floor. The residence is substantially different to the original dwelling both in size and physical appearance.

The concealed flat roof has now been completely replaced(?) by a steeply pitched corrugated colorbond steel roof. As well as the addition of rooms in the attic the great room has been lost through the introduction of a dining room and toilet to the north and enlargement of a bedroom to the south. A large sunroom has been added on the east side of the former great room so that the room is now totally internal.

Walls are generally rendered masonry with new walls plasterboard faced. The timber floors are generally carpeted, with ceramic tiles in the bathroom.

The kitchen, bathroom and laundry area have been extensively refurbished and contain all modern fittings and fixtures.

Lighting throughout the house is modern pendant style or ceiling mounted fittings.

Planning changes in the 1990s have removed any clear understanding of the position of the great room. The fireplace in the lounge room appears to be an original fixture.

The ceilings of Briarcliffe are generally plaster or plasterboard with the exception of finely detailed pressed metal ceilings in the ensuite and main bathroom on the ground floor.

The interior of Briarcliffe presents very much as a modern residence. The significant indication of its earlier construction is the detailing of the windows and the vertical proportioned four panel internal doors.

THE GARDENS

The gardens around Briarcliffe cover over one acre. They have been extensively

terraced using stone retaining walls some of which is the same material as the house. The gardens are broken down into vistas and rooms by shrubs planting above each retaining wall. The lower shrub planting's and floral beds have a canopy formed by the large mature exotic and native trees which are distributed within the open lawn.

History: Not Available

Condition and Integrity:

The original sandstone external walls of the house have been retained and are generally in good condition. A couple of cracked stones on areas of stonework were identified in the inspection.

The interior of the house is in very good condition.

Location:

Great Western Highway, Glenbrook, located adjacent to the RAAF Air Headquarters..

Bibliography: Not Available

Report Produced: Mon Jan 29 17:37:01 2007

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