

IDENTIFIER	HOUSE	Citation No	HG10
Other name/s	<i>Clarence Lodge; Heristal</i>	Melway ref	58 J9
Address	58 Norwood Road CAULFIELD NORTH	Date/s	1890
Designer/s	A B Rieusset	Builder/s	James Taylor



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019



Location map and extent of HO

Heritage Group	Residential building (private)	Condition	Excellent
Heritage Category	House	Intactness	Good (some changes)
Thematic context	6.7 Making homes for Victorians		
Recommendation	Include on heritage overlay schedule as an individual heritage place		
Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

Clarence Lodge, at 58 Norwood Road, Caulfield North, is a large single-storey double-fronted hip-roofed Late Victorian villa in a hybrid Queen Anne style, with tall chimneys, prominent gable end, shaped bargeboards, canted bay window, leadlight windows and expansive return verandah with turned posts, lattice freeze and tessellated floor. Designed by architect R B Rieusset, the house was built in 1890 for successful Boom-era businessman and his wife, who lived there only very briefly before his business collapsed in 1891.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the house.

How is it significant?

Clarence Lodge satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
- Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Why is it significant?

Clarence Lodge is aesthetically significant as a distinctive and idiosyncratic example of Boom-era residential architecture. Its design freely adapted the typical forms and motifs of the prevailing Late Victorian villa style (eg double-fronted asymmetrical façade composition, return verandah and canted bay window), merged with those that are more indicative of the emerging Queen Anne style (eg overscaled gable end with shaped bargeboards, turned posts and tall chimneys). Within this unusual composition, several elements are particularly quirky, such as the verandah extended across the projecting bay, the canted highlight window above the verandah roof, and the turned timber finials supporting the gable eaves. The house demonstrates a high degree of creative achievement as an early manifestation of the gradual shift towards the Federation style, which would dominate domestic architecture in Australia in the first decade of the twentieth century. It is rare as one of only a small number of houses in Melbourne from the late 1880s and early 1890s that can be considered as prototypes for this important aesthetic shift. (*Criteria B, E and F*)

History

Note: Identifying details of property owners and their families have been deleted as per Council direction

The house at 58 Norwood Road, Caulfield North, was erected in 1890 for a Boom-era businessman. Born in London in the late 1840s, he later worked as a bank clerk in Berkshire and had married by the early 1870s. The family migrated to Australia during the prosperous Boom period of the late 1880s, when the future house owner became a director of a glass bottle works in Port Melbourne. He duly bought out his partners to take full control of the company but later changed direction, establishing a different business as an importer. This venture thrived, in 1890, it was reported that the total value of goods imported over the previous eighteen months amounted to more than £31,000 (*Argus* 06/05/1891:9).

Emboldened by professional success, the family planned to build a grand new residence for themselves, and acquired land in Norwood Road, Caulfield North. An L-shaped thoroughfare linking Dandenong Road with Orrong Road, Norwood Road was to become an enclave for noted Melburnians; its future residents would include a knighted judge and a prominent manufacturer. The site of the importer's house, purchased in his wife's name for the sum of £800, was a large block on the south side of the street, in a prime position at the far eastern end that offered an unobstructed view up to Dandenong Road. The project proceeded swiftly and, on 22 March 1890, the *Argus* announced that "tenders are invited for villa residence, stabling, &c, Norwood Road, Caulfield. Plans and specifications may be seen between 10 and 1 o'clock at the office of A B Rieusset, architect, 22 Moleworth Chambers, Chancery Lane".

Augustine Benedict Rieusset (1854-1935) was born in Ramsgate, Kent, but trained as an architect in Liverpool, where he married in 1878. He and his wife migrated to Australia five years later, settling in Melbourne where he commenced private practice from Molesworth Chambers in the block of Little Collins Street known as Chancery Lane. Little is recorded of Rieusset's early career; in the late 1880s, he entered a competition for Melbourne's new Stock Exchange and called tenders for shops in Spencer Street. During 1890, after calling tenders for the house in Norwood Road, Rieusset relocated his office to the Empire Buildings in Collins Street, and went on to receive further residential commissions. In 1890, he was elected an associate of the RVIA, and, the following year, served as president of the Victorian Architectural & Engineering Association. With the architectural profession in Melbourne badly affected by the Depression of the early 1890s, Rieusset was one of a number of local practitioners who opted to move to Western Australia, which was then booming from a belated Gold Rush. Re-establishing a successful architectural practice in Perth, Rieusset was to remain there for the rest of his life.

Erected by Hawthorn builder James Taylor at a cost of £1,700, the house in Norwood Road that Rieusset designed for the importer and his wife was completed by October 1890, when it appeared in the *Building Engineering & Mining Journal*. A full-page perspective drawing was accompanied by text noting that “it is built of red brick pointed with black ash mortar; roofs are covered with green slates and red terracotta ridging. The verandahs are tiled with tiles supplied by the Australian Tessellated Tile Company (of Mitcham). The kitchens, &c, are ventilated by means of torpedo vents and Wareham’s Ventilators”. Palatial in scale, the nine-roomed house comprised “drawing room, dining room, sitting room, four bedrooms, servant’s bedroom, stores, pantries, bathrooms, kitchen, scullery, washhouse”, while the ground included a tennis court and “two stall stable, harness room, man’s room, coach house and loft with all the necessary appurtenances”.

Sadly, the new house did not provide the long-term family residence they had planned. During 1890, the owner’s import business collapsed spectacularly; early the following year, builder James Taylor, who was still owed £104, initiated a Supreme Court case against the importer’s wife, the legal owner of the new house. In February 1891, the property was offered for sale by auction, advertised as “that very valuable and charming property known as *Clarence Lodge*... a really well built modern brick villa, artistically finished, containing twelve rooms and every convenience; also coach house, stables, etc” (*Argus* 31/01/1891). In March, an absolute order was granted for the owner’s estate to be compulsory sequestered, followed by a ruling that his wife’s estate could also be levied (*Prahran Telegraph* 28/03/1891:3).

After the family’ premature departure, ownership of the Norwood Road house was vested in the Australian Deposit & Mortgage Bank (and later the Colonial Bank) for the next two decades. Still referred to as *Clarence Lodge* during that period, it was successively occupied by a retired Major-General and then a manufacturer. In 1913, the house was acquired from the Colonial Bank by a couple who renamed it *Heristal*, evidently as an arcane historical allusion to their surname.

Description

The house at 58 Norwood Road, Caulfield North, is a large single-storey Late Victorian brick villa in a Queen Anne style, with hipped slate-clad roof clad, penetrated by chimneys with moulded cornices and capping. The external walls, originally of tuck-pointed red brick, have since been rendered. The house has an asymmetrical triple-fronted facade with a return verandah that extends along the front (north) and side (west) sides, comprising a bullnosed roof of corrugated steel, supported on turned timber posts with curved brackets and a lattice frieze. The verandah floor has an ornate tessellated floor, and bluestone edging.

The asymmetrical triple-fronted street façade comprises a recessed central bay, a slightly projecting bay to the right (west) side, and a more prominently projecting bay to the left (east). The largest bay is further emphasised by a prominent gable end with plain infill and carved timber bargeboards that, at the lower end, are supported on turned timber posts that align with those of the front verandah. This bay also has a full-width canted bay window with moulded sill and timber-framed windows, with a matching canted highlight window (containing leadlight glazing) that is sandwiched between the apex of the verandah roof and the underside of the projecting gable. The corresponding bay to the east side of the street façade has a tall pair of rectangular windows, while the recessed central bay has an off-centre arched opening forming a recess for the front door. There is a small window alongside, with moulded sill, and another leadlight highlight window above, between the roof eaves and the verandah.

The changes made to the exterior, namely the replacement of original slate roof (with new slates), and the rendering of the original face brickwork, are not considered to have compromised the distinctive form and detailing of the original house to the degree that a heritage overlay would no longer be considered appropriate.

Recent aerial photographs of the property show that a gable-roofed outbuilding still stands in the south-west corner of the property, where stables were indicated on the 1902 MMBW Detail Plan. However, it has not been confirmed if this outbuilding is in fact the original stable. Comparing the aerial photograph with the MMBW plan, it is also apparent that the current location of the tennis court, to the west of the main house, does not correspond precisely to its position in 1902.

Comparisons

The unusual style of *Clarence Lodge* was acknowledged as early as 1979, when Conrad Hamann mentioned the house in an article tracing the emergence and development of the Federation style from the 1880s to the 1920s. Discussing early local manifestations of the Queen Anne idiom, influenced by the work of British architect Richard Norman Shaw and others, Hamann identified A B Rieusset as an early champion of Shaw's approach, noting that "in 1890, after several tirades against Melbourne's 'gimcrack' and 'overornamented' buildings, he designed a house in the Melbourne suburb of Caulfield. Here, he pushed 'Norman Shaw' forms back into iconographic motifs behind a verandah which circled a standard Melbourne villa homestead fashion. To avoid dark interiors that bedeviled verandahed house, he added a complex series of skylights which distorted the Shavian gables completely." However, Hamann went on to state that, while the house adopted some forms and details of the maturing Queen Anne style, it could not be considered a prototype for the more overt manifestation of the Federation Villa, which Hamann attributed to certain other Melbourne architects working in the late 1880s and early '90s, such as E G Killburn, Arthur Fisher, Christopher Cowper, Alfred Dunn and Beverley Ussher.

As an idiosyncratic and experimental foray into new aesthetic influences, *Clarence Lodge* has few direct comparators in the City of Glen Eira. The contemporaneous *Alnick* at 11 Railway Avenue, Murrumbena (architect unknown, 1892-93), erected for Sir James Patterson and already included on the heritage overlay schedule (HO57), is comparably hybrid in its mix of typical Late Victorian finishes and details (eg bichromatic brickwork, slate roof and canted bay windows) with those associated with the developing Queen Anne style (eg unusual triple-fronted symmetrical façade, shingled bays and proto-Federation timber detailing to verandah and gable ends). This approach, however, would not become more widespread in the study area until the turn of the century, typified by a red brick villa at 83 St Georges Road, Elsternwick (c1902) [part HO72], with roughcast half-timbered gable ends, tiled roof and lacework frieze to a recessed skillion-roofed verandah.

Ultimately, *Clarence Lodge* can only really be compared with other examples of the work of its own architect. Little seems to be recorded of Rieusset's output in Melbourne in the 1880s and early '90s, and *Clarence Lodge* is his only known building in what is now the City of Glen Eira. The few other examples of his residential work identified elsewhere, including single-storey detached villas at 15 Russell Street, Surrey Hills (1890) and 49 Emo Road, Malvern (1891), and a two-storey terrace house at 761 Park Street, Brunswick West (1891), are all individually distinctive but echo *Clarence Lodge* in their use of slate roofs, tall chimneys, half-timbered gable ends and integrated verandahs.

A red brick house still standing at 15 Alma Road, Camberwell (Evander McIvor, 1890-91), with slate roof and tall chimneys, is even more eerily reminiscent to *Clarence Lodge* in its asymmetrical double-fronted composition with a verandah that extends across the entire façade, including the projecting gabled bay enlivened with shaped bargeboards, brackets and unusual trussed infill. This unusual house was described in Graeme Butler's *Camberwell Conservation Study* (1991) as "perhaps a prototype for the later Queen Anne villa style", while a more recent heritage review by Lovell Chen added that it "ranks with only six or seven prototypes for the Federation villa that appeared in Melbourne in the period 1889-92... The most direct formal parallel is A B Rieusset's villa in Caulfield, which was published around the same time. Evander McIvor, as with A B Rieusset, Alfred Dunn, Christopher Cowper and others active in the Camberwell-Surrey Hills area, was prominent in moving in this direction and the house sets out much of the Federation form that would spread around Australia in the next ten years".

References

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Conrad Hamann, “Nationalism and Reform in Australian Architecture, 1880-1920”, *Historical Studies*, XVIII, 72 (April 1979), pp 393-411.

Hugh Fraser and Ray Joyce, *The Federation House: Australia’s Own Style*. Sydney, 1986.

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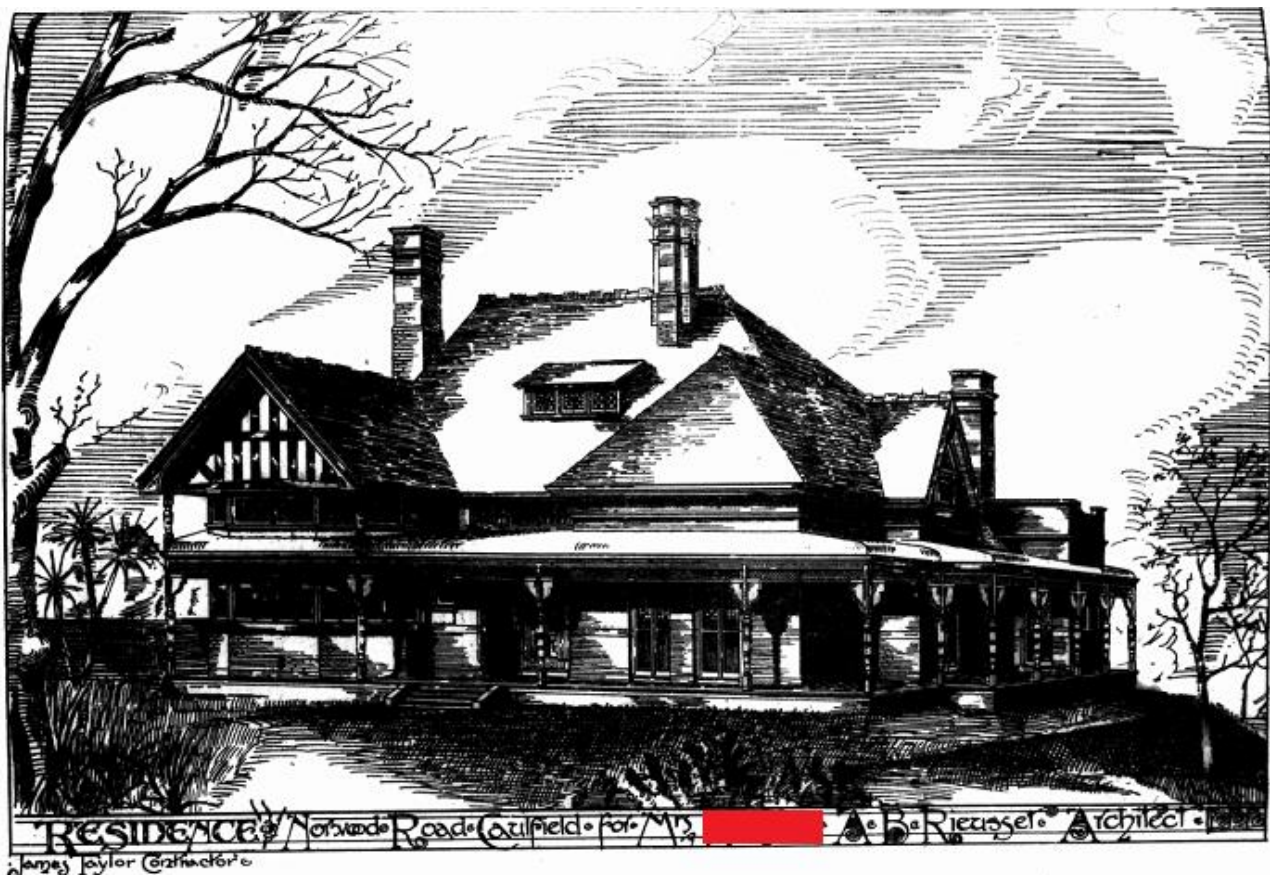
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Dr John J Taylor, “Augustine Benedictine Rieusset”, 8pp typescript, dated February 2013.
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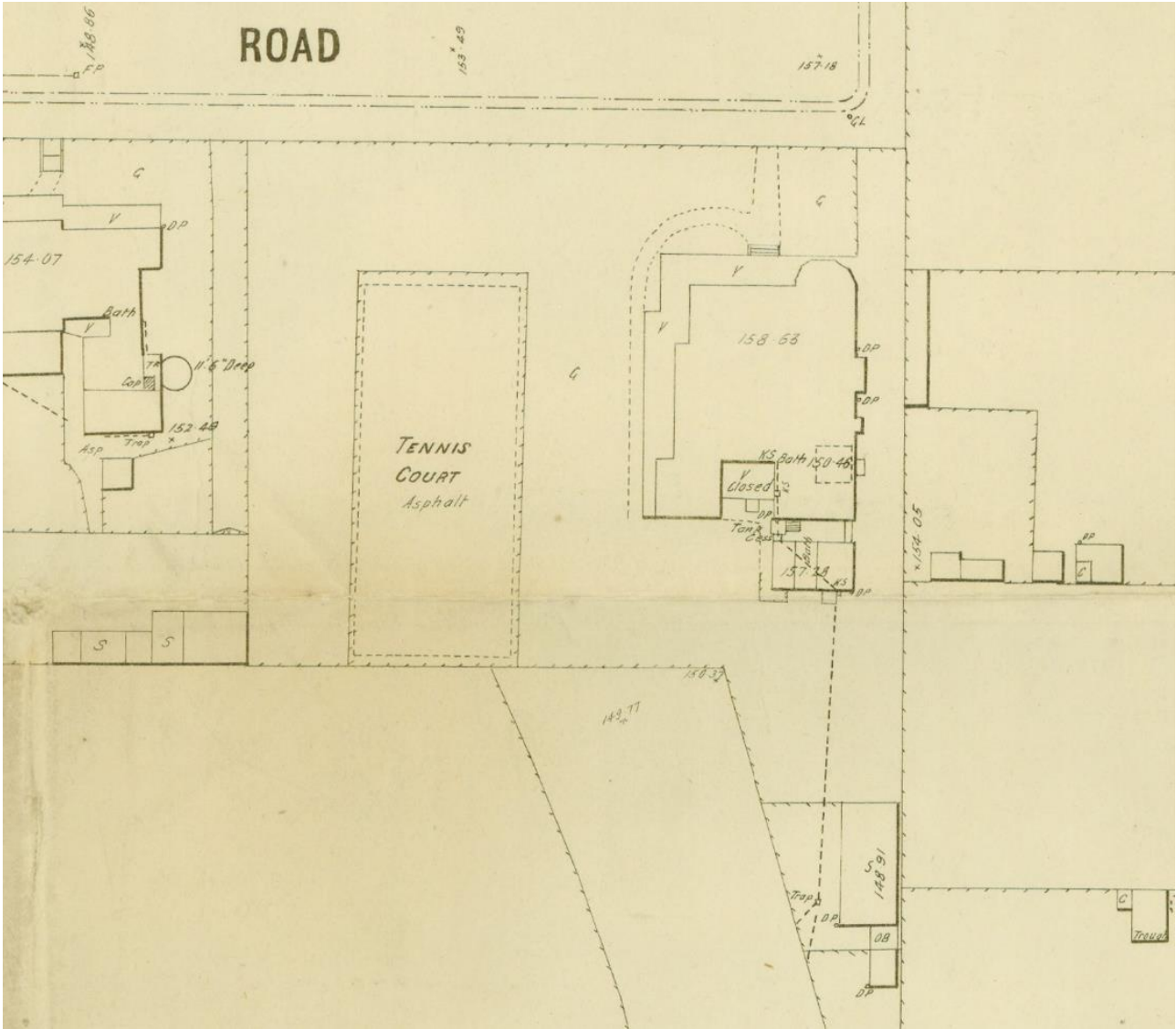
Identified by

Andrew Ward (C graded list)



A B Rieusset’s original perspective drawing of the house

Source: *Building Engineering & Mining Journal*, 11 October 1890, p 360.



Excerpt of MMBW Detail Plan No1413, dated February 1902; note stable in south-west corner of block
 Source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria