

Omro Statement of Significance August 2020

Heritage Place: 230 Cotham Road Kew

PS ref no: HO812



What is significant?

The property named 'Omro', and its front garden containing a Canary Island Date Palm, at 230 Cotham Road, Kew are significant to the City of Boroondara. The house was commissioned by the internationally renowned American spirit medium William Marion Fay as a home for himself and his wife, Eliza Lydia Fay.

How is it significant?

'Omro' is of local historical, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

'Omro' is of historical significance as a relatively early example of attic bungalow that represents an established development pattern of bungalow style residences referencing an informal ruralised style architecture for urban populations attracted to semi-rural areas. The house was more than likely architect-designed. (Criterion A)

'Omro' is representative of an early example of Queen Anne style attic bungalow, incorporating a covered balcony at first floor level, of the Federation-era. Featuring finely detailed red brick, render dressings, rough-cast surfaces, timber fretwork, terracotta and gablet details typical of the period, the house expertly references the informal ruralised style typified by the vernacular arising in Australia following Federation in 1901. Its setting is enhanced by a mature Canary Island Palm in the front garden, which was a popular species in the early twentieth century and appears to be an early planting. (Criterion E)

'Omro' is important for its associations with the world renowned American spirit medium William Marion Fay, a contemporary of the renowned mediums the Davenport Brothers, the 'Dean of American Magicians' Harry Kellar and famous escape artist Harry Houdini. Fay having commissioned 'Omro' as his own residence for he and his wife, Eliza Lydia Fay, in 1914. (Criterion H)

Primary source

City of Boroondara Municipal Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 4. Kew, Revised Report, 11 June 2020.