

Longford

Prepared by: Context Pty Ltd

Address: 123 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn

Name: Longford	Survey Date: 1 April 2016
Place Type: Residential	Architect: attributed to William Robertson
Grading: Significant	Builder:
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1890-91



Historical Context

This area of Hawthorn, just to the east of Glenferrie Road, was almost completely developed by the turn-of-the-century, with dense development of freestanding Victorian houses shown on the 1903 MMBW plan (Detail Plan No. 1505). The more prestigious main roads, Glenferrie and Riversdale, were occupied almost solely by large, double-fronted villas with generous front and side setbacks, 123 Riversdale Road being one of them. Nearby side streets, such as Henrietta, had a more modest class of development, with smaller double-fronted and long, narrow single-fronted houses, most of them with minimal side setbacks.

History

The Victorian house known as 'Longford' located at number 123 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, was constructed in 1890-91 for Cecil Robertson.

The property was originally part of a large Crown Allotment bounded by The Boulevard in the north, Kooyongkoot Road to the east, Riversdale Road to the south and Glenferrie Road to the west, which was purchased by George Arnold in 1884 (LV: 1537/216). Arnold subdivided the land into 45 individual parcels for sale that same year. John Marshall Davidson acquired the land at 123 (then 77) Riversdale Road in 1885.

The site comprising 123 Riversdale Road was later sold to estate agent Cecil Andrew Berkeley Robertson in January 1888, who had offices in East Melbourne (LV: 1537/216; S&McD). Robertson took out a mortgage on the property in September 1890, possibly to fund the construction of a house on this site. Robertson then went on to acquire adjacent land at number 79 Riversdale Road in March of 1892, which he retained until 1899 before selling it on (house now demolished) (S&McD; LV: 2414/678).

Cecil Robertson is the brother of architect William Robertson, a partner in architectural practice Inskip and Robertson, designers of the nearby polychrome brick house at 47 Lisson Grove in 1888 (HO88). As Cecil Robertson may have engaged the services of his brother to design this speculative development, a brief biography of William Robertson is found at the end of this history.

A year after mortgaging 123 Riversdale Road, Cecil Robertson sold it to William Smith Mitchell, a printer, on 7 September 1891 (LV: 1731/129). The house appeared in the Sands & McDougall's street directory, with the Mitchells resident, for the first time in 1892, indicating that it had been completed in 1891. Previously they had lived in Emerald Hill, South Melbourne (S&McD). The house also appeared for the first time in the City of Hawthorn rate books in February 1892, described as a 12-roomed house with a rateable value of £90 (Hawthorn RB:1259), also indicating that the house had been completed in late 1891, just before Mitchell purchased it.

William, his wife Ellen (nee Prussia) and their family of eight children comprising four boys and four girls lived in the home on Riversdale Road, already called 'Longford', for the next 23 years. The first recorded event at Longford was reported in May of 1892, when Mr and Mrs Mitchell threw a lavish birthday party for their eldest daughter Annie's 24th birthday, which was attended by over 50 guests and described as 'one of the pleasantest evenings of the season' (*Melbourne Punch* 19 May 1892:11).

Over subsequent years, Longford played host to several of the Mitchell children's weddings, including that of their daughter Margaret in 1896, their son William in 1898, as well as their daughter Ellen (Nellie) in 1904 (*Table Talk* 20 November 1896:9; *The Argus* 2 June 1898:1; *The Australasian* 5 March 1904:55).

The Mitchells' occupation of Longford ended some time in 1914 or 1915, at which time William, Ellen and their unmarried children relocated to a smaller home in Canterbury Road, St Kilda (Caulfield RB:3456). Ellen Mitchell passed away soon after the move in 1915 (BDM 10120).

Following the Mitchell's departure from Longford, street directories list a Mrs Mary M Vivian at the address, then numbered 115 Riversdale Road (S&McD). The property was then occupied by Alexander and Augusta Ground between 1916 and 1917, followed by mechanic William Arthur Keys and his wife Julie Violet Keys from 1918 (S&McD; *The Queenslander* 26 August 1916:9).

Throughout its changes in occupancy, the property remained under William Smith Mitchell's ownership until his death in 1920, when it was purchased by Longford's then-

occupant William Arthur Keys (LV 4422/372). The Keys family lived at the home for several decades, passing to Mrs Julie Keys' ownership after the death of William in 1926 and then to their daughter after Julie's death in 1953, before finally being sold outside the family in 1971 (LV 4422/372). Notices advertising vacant rooms for rent at Longford appeared numerous times in the late 1930s to early 1940s, indicating that Julie Keys ran a boarding house at the property for a period of time (*The Argus* 18 December 1937:20; *The Argus* 4 March 1939:24; *The Argus* 15 January 1941:12).

Architect William Edward Robertson

The following is cited from Taylor (2014):

William Edward Robertson (1863-1929) was born 25 August 1863 in Melbourne, son of Dr James Robertson, who had trained at Glasgow University before migrating to Australia in 1854. William received his educational training at the Toorak and Scotch Colleges of Melbourne, and subsequently was articled to A.E. Johnston, of the firm of Smith & Johnston Architects, Melbourne. Having served a term of four years with this business Robertson went abroad for a couple of years and 'studied the prevailing forms of architecture on the European Continent, in England, and America'.

Returning to Melbourne in 1888, Robertson became an Associate of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) in April 1888. In the same month he was admitted to a partnership with George Charles Inskip (1840-1931), and during the five years that this joint venture existed, the firm was responsible for some important works. Conspicuous among these were many country branches of the Union Bank, the National Bank at Kew, and a residence for solicitor-speculator-politician Sir Matthew Davies, erected at a cost of £12,000, which 'took its place among the finest structures in Victoria'. The firm also designed the Union Bank completed in 1889 on the corner of High and Cliff Streets, Fremantle, Western Australia.

Robertson practiced with Inskip in Victoria up until c.1893, when business conditions were extremely difficult, due to recession, and in November 1894 he ceased to be a member of the RVIA. As was the case with many Melbourne architects, Robertson eventually fled depressed economic conditions of the 1890s, migrating to gold-boom Western Australia in search of work. He is listed in WA goldfields towns as an architect within Wisers Directory of 1897-1898 at Kurawa (Broad Arrow), in 1899-1900 at Broad Arrow, perhaps in 1901 (as J.H. Robertson?) at Mt Malcolm, and 1902-1903 at Laverton, where he was kept busy with the designs and erection of hotels and commercial premises. ... Robertson completed numerous shops, offices, warehouses, and residences in the Perth metropolitan area during the period 1906-1928.

Works by Inskip & Robertson in Victoria include the house at 47 Lisson Grove, Hawthorn, of 1888 (HO88); the former National Bank of Australia, 185 High Street, Kew, of 1891 (HO67); the former Union Banks at 165-167 Smith Street, Fitzroy of 1889-90 (VHR H506), and at 387-389 Sydney Road, Brunswick of 1890 (Moreland HO158); the former Carlton Club at 313-315 Drummond Street, Carlton of 1889 which features Venetian Gothic polychrome brickwork (VHR H43); and the former Convalescent Home for Women, 246 Clayton Road, Clayton of 1888 which is a two storey bichrome residential-like building (Monash HO14).

Description & Integrity

This is a substantial two-storey polychrome brick Italianate villa of the Victorian era. It retains a gilded name painted on the verandah beam, reading 'Longford'. The house is located on the north side of Riversdale Road, on the block just east of Glenferrie Road. It has a generous garden setback, though half of the front garden has recently been paved to allow for parking. The outbuildings shown on the 1903 MMBW plan have all been replaced. There is a modern front brick fence (about 1.8 metres) which is sympathetic in

its use of brick that matches the house, and the wide front drive allows unimpeded views to the house.

Like many Italianate houses, it has an asymmetric façade created by a projecting bay to one side, with a verandah to the recessed side of the facade. In this case, the bay is canted and sits beneath a picturesque steep semi-octagonal hip roof. The main roof has the Italianate M-profile hip and retains its slate covering. The rear wing, which is partially single-storey, has a separate roof, probably skillion, clad in metal (not visible from the public domain).

The verandah is two-storeys in height and is highly intact, retaining verandah beams, fluted cast-iron columns, integrated cast-iron frieze and brackets, and first-floor balustrade panels depicting flowers in a vase. The ground floor retains the original tessellated tiles with a bluestone edging.

Windows are all double-hung timber sashes with painted sills (possibly bluestone, or rendered brick). A full-height double-hung window with panelling at the base of the lower sash provides access to the first floor verandah. The front door and surrounds are typical of the better late Victorian dwellings, with a six-panelled door featuring bolection mouldings and fielded panels, sidelights and highlights that are filled with etched glass with a simple border. The front door knob and doorbell (to the side) have also survived.

Apart from the bold, canted bay, the main feature of distinction is the tuckpointed polychrome brickwork. The walls are primarily of brown Hawthorn bricks with beltcourses and window and door reveals of red brick, and banded flat-arched lintels of cream and red brick. Beneath the eaves is an unusual chequerboard pattern. There are large diamond-shaped diaper patterns on the side of the projecting bay made up of all three brick colours. The chimneys are also of polychrome brick with moulded cement-render cornices. The survival of the associated tuckpointing (a white ribbon on stopping to match each brick colour) indicates that the brickwork has never been overpainted.

The house appears to be highly intact, as viewed from the public domain, apart from overpainting of a side wall and of the window sills.

Comparative Analysis

Longford, at 123 Riversdale Road, can be compared to other substantial two-storey Italianate villas with an asymmetrical façade. While modest single-storey Italianate houses sometimes had a plain, rectangular projecting bay, the more prestigious two-storey houses almost always had a canted bay or a two-storey canted bay window to the rectangular bay, creating a more dynamic and sculptural presence. As a rule, they have a double-storey verandah with cast-iron elements. They were built in the 1880s and early 1890s.

Most examples of this type on the Boroondara Heritage Overlay have cement-rendered walls, the more ornate examples incorporating run mouldings and cast decoration. Examples of this type that are similar in plan and scale to Longford include 14 Auburn Grove, Hawthorn East (HO432), 173 Auburn Road, Hawthorn (HO424), 58 Lisson Grove, Hawthorn (HO492), and 89 Union Road, Surrey Hills (HO409). 67 Mayston Street, Hawthorn East, is a single-fronted version of this type (HO465). Longford compares well in its scale, massing and intactness to these examples.

Examples of two-storey Italianate villas executed in face brick, particularly bichrome or polychrome brick, are rarer in Boroondara.

As noted in the comparative analysis of the bichrome brick Springfield, 6 Berkeley Street, Hawthorn (HO444), prepared as part of the Review of C* Grade Buildings in the Former

City of Hawthorn (Lovell Chen, 2006): *Springfield's details and bichrome patterning resemble a great many single-storey Italianate houses of its time, but it stands out to a degree as bichrome patterning was not nearly as common in two-storey Italianate designs using a canted bay composition. Some bichrome houses are found in Lyndhurst Crescent, Hawthorn, but these do not have canted bays.*

Indeed, the number of single-storey bichrome (and a few polychrome) houses in the Boroondara Heritage Overlay is much higher than two-storey. Single-storey individually significant examples include: 7 Muir Street, Hawthorn (cream bricks overpainted, HO466), 161 Cotham Road, Kew (HO284), 66-68 Pakington Street, Kew (HO329), 83 and 96 Walpole Street, Kew (HO354 & HO356), 136 Canterbury Road, Canterbury (HO375), 25 and 36-38 Alma Road, Camberwell (HO366 & HO368).

Two-storey bichrome examples of asymmetrical Italianate villas identified are:

- 6 Berkeley Street, Hawthorn (HO444) - canted bay, bichrome brick with banded lintels, cream quoins, and diaper designs below windows; bracketed eaves, verandah form and detail similar to 123 Riversdale Road.
- 1 Goodall Street, Hawthorn (HO428) - canted bay, bichrome brick with very restrained patterns (Hawthorn and red), return verandah with cast-iron detail, bracketed eaves. On a prominent corner site.
- 47 Lisson Grove, Hawthorn (HO88) - rectangular bay, polychrome brickwork described as atypically 'sombre' for the late 1880s, return verandah with cast-iron detail.
- 12 Sackville Street, Kew (Significant in HO162) - polychromatic brick with quoins, diaper patterns, beltcourses and banded arches above the windows, bracketed eaves, return verandah with cast-iron detail.

In its scale, 123 Riversdale Road is closest to 6 Berkeley Street, as the other three have a return verandah. Other details are also most similar to 6 Berkeley Street, including the patterning of the brickwork and verandah cast iron. 123 Riversdale Road is unusual in having a chequerboard pattern to the eaves, instead of the more standard cast brackets. Its level of intactness compares well to all three houses. The use of three brick colours, instead of the more typical two (as seen at 6 Berkeley Street and 1 Goodall Street) adds lively visual interest to 123 Riversdale Road, as do the patterns to the eaves and massive diaper pattern to the walls.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Planning and Community Development, September 2012, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

NA

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

NA

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

NA

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Longford, at 123 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, is a fine and intact example of a two-storey Italianate villa with a canted bay to the façade. This was a popular form in the 1880s and early 1890s for more substantial detached houses in the middle-class Boroondara suburbs. It displays elements typical of the style including an M-profile hip roof with slate cladding, a bold two-storey canted bay with a steep semi-hexagonal roof, and a two-storey verandah with cast-iron details.

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Longford retains intact polychrome brickwork and tuckpointing, which is seen most commonly on asymmetric single-storey Italianate houses, while most two-storey examples were rendered. The use of colour in the brickwork adds visual interest to the design, and is distinguished by the unusual chequerboard pattern instead of eaves brackets and by the oversized diaper patterns on the wall of the canted bay.

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

NA

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

NA

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

NA

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

Longford, 123 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, is significant. It is a two-storey Victorian Italianate polychrome brick house.

It was built as a speculative development for estate agent Cecil Robertson in 1890-91. It may have been designed by his brother, architect William Edward Robertson, who was then a partner in the practice Inskip and Robertson, best known for their bank buildings. Upon completion, the house was sold to William Smith Mitchell, a printer, who resided there with his family until around 1914.

How is it significant?

Longford is of local architectural (representative) and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

Architecturally, it is a fine and intact example of a two-storey Italianate villa with a canted bay to the façade. This was a popular form in the 1880s and early 1890s for more substantial detached houses in the middle-class Boroondara suburbs. It displays elements typical of its type including an M-profile hip roof with slate cladding, a bold two-storey canted bay with a steep semi-hexagonal roof, and a two-storey verandah with cast-iron details. (Criterion D)

It is aesthetically significant for the retention of intact polychrome brickwork and tuckpointing. This type of brickwork was seen most commonly on asymmetric single-storey Italianate houses, while most two-storey examples were rendered. The use of colour in the brickwork adds visual interest to the design, and is distinguished by an unusual chequerboard pattern to the eaves instead of the more common brackets, and by the oversized diaper patterns on the wall of the canted bay. (Criterion E)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External Paint Colours <i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal Alteration Controls <i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree Controls <i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	No
Victorian Heritage Register <i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Incorporated Plan <i>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</i>	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions <i>Are there outbuildings and fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted <i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No

Aboriginal Heritage Place	
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<i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No
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Identified By

M Gould, Hawthorn Heritage Study, 1992.

References

Argus.

Australasian.

BDM: Births, Deaths & Marriages database, Death Notice of Ellen Mitchell, registry number 10120.

City of Caulfield (Caulfield RB) municipal rate books.

City of Hawthorn (Hawthorn RB) municipal rate books.

LV: Land Victoria certificates of title.

Melbourne Punch Queenslander.

Sands & McDougall (S&McD) directories.

Table Talk.

Taylor, Dr John J., 'William Edward Robertson (1863-1929)', Western Australian Architect Biographies, <http://www.architecture.com.au/> accessed 15 April 2016.