

Place Details

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Graythwaite, 20 Edward St, North Sydney, NSW, Australia

Photographs:	None
List:	National Heritage List
Class:	Historic
Legal Status:	Place not included in NHL
Place ID:	105826
Place File No:	1/13/027/0025

Summary Statement of Significance:

Graythwaite has local and State significance as an early example of a nineteenth century North Shore residence developed beside Sydney Harbour and planned to take advantage of water views.

Graythwaite is associated with a number of important people including Thomas Walker the Deputy Commissary General and Thomas and George Dibbs. Thomas Dibbs was a prominent public figure who made important contributions in New South Wales in the area of banking and finance. His brother Sir George Dibbs was a significant public figure who made important contributions in the area of Government. He was appointed to the position of Colonial Treasurer and was a Premier of NSW. He was also a delegate to the 1891 Federation Convention.

Graythwaite has some local and potentially wider regional social value as a place which was used as a convalescent home for the care of returned soldiers from both the First and Second World Wars.

These values while of some importance at the State level are not outstanding in comparison to other similar places across Australia. Graythwaite's associations with prominent public figures were also found to be important at the local and regional level only.

Consequently Graythwaite is not considered to be of outstanding heritage value to the nation.

Official Values: Not Available

Description:

The nominated place consists of an unusually large residential property within the suburb of North Sydney located within one kilometre of the shores of Sydney Harbour. The site now includes a group of buildings located on the highest ground with the remaining area currently laid out as open space with some cultural planting. Graythwaite is the name given to the property.

Building group

The cluster of buildings in the north east corner of the property is made up of the :

- Graythwaite mansion including modifications and additions made by Sayers (1853-1873) and Dibbs (1873-1915). Since 1916 the mansion has undergone adaption as a hospital and nursing home.
- Former stables c1830s;
- Outbuildings including later stables c 1880s;
- Recreation Room c1918 and
- Hospital ward c1918.

Garden area.

The area adjacent to the Graythwaite mansion slopes down towards the harbour (Union Street) and has been terraced. Some terracing may be related to early (c1830s) vinery planting. The landscape and grounds of Graythwaite have been described (NSW Heritage Register Place Report) as being mainly made up of remnant tree plantings and other remnant plantings thought to relate to former garden areas or are weeds which have become established over a long period of seclusion. Early photos of the site c1890s show plantings (including mature tree plantings) associated with the long driveway and in areas along terrace edges. Clusters of tree planting can also be seen loosely scattered on the mid terrace area.

Of particular note are the mature tree specimens (mainly figs) along the Union Street and Bank Street site boundaries and in other areas across the site. Other trees scattered across the site include giant bamboo, firewheel tree, pepperberry tree, Cook's pine, Monterey pine and some palms. Some fruit tree plantings (including citrus, fig, loquat, pomegranate, carob, peach, banana, quince tree, pawpaw and white mulberry) remain and these may reflect replanting of earlier orchard areas. Some further planting is associated with the carriage loop immediately south of the main house and some poplars may be remnant early shelter belts or ornamental plantings. A number of other weed species have also become established on site some of which may have been deliberately planted in the past. For example white poplars, privet, nettle tree, camphor laurels, sweet pittosporum, brush box, night cestrum, coral tree, native quince, African olive, lantana, fennel, Madiera vine, butterfly bush, asthma plant, Alectryon species and bleeding heart tree.

History:

Course and pattern of settlement in North Sydney

After the establishment of Sydney in 1788, settlement of the north shore of the harbour was quite limited. By the 1790s small isolated settlements began in areas such as Hunters Hill and Field of Mars. However these settlements were often not occupied at this time because the 1790s was a period of economic depression. The north shore was also considered to be of limited agricultural potential compared with good arable land found in areas like Parramatta. (Russel E. 1990 p30).

By 1853 "increases of population began to change the character of the North Shore from a lonely district partly uninhabited and partly rural (to a place which had) a number of scattered villages. The Census of 1846 counted 412 persons in the Town and District of St Leonard's now called North Sydney" (Russel E. 1990 p65). By 1881 the population had risen to 11,010. (Russel E. 1990 p114). This rise in population is attributed to the economic growth connected with gold mining and the demand for wool. (Parker B. & Parker J. 1993. p129).

Prior to 1932 access to the North Shore from the southern side of the harbour was limited to ferry transport only. By the late 1870s efforts were being made, by the local north shore community, to establish a bridge crossing. Transport from ferry terminals to other areas in the north shore was by horse drawn vehicles. (Russel E. 1990 p128). Rail construction proposals also started to emerge in 1881. By 1893 a north shore railway line was established. (Russel E. 1990 p 154). Access to the north shore was improved by the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932. This facilitated the further development and expansion of suburbs from 1932.

The existing Graythwaite property was part of an early grant (by purchase) to Thomas Walker in 1832. By 1837 Walker had constructed a residence on the property. There is conflicting information as to whether this residence was demolished (SHR 01617 and Graythwaite Website History). Later the site was sold to Edwin Sayers in 1853 who by 1867 had built a substantial residence which is now known as Graythwaite. In 1873 the property was sold to Thomas Dibbs who made substantial improvements (c1875 and c1881-2) to the property including extensive renovations and additions to the existing Sayers mansion. These renovations took full advantage of its harbour side position and access to harbour views.

The Graythwaite estate has a number of remnant features which are associated with the site's nineteenth century history. The mansion (Sayers and Dibbs period), the cultural planting, the 1873 lot boundary, the c1830s stables, the c1880s outbuildings and the remnant cistern are all testimony to the residential use of the site during the nineteenth century. The long (1832-1915) continuous use of the site as a residential

property has value in demonstrating the living conditions of some of Sydney's more wealthy citizens in the early, mid and late nineteenth century.

Preliminary research has not identified any substantial collection of associated documentary material such as photos, oral history, plans or other documentary evidence. Some photos of the site taken during the nineteenth century have been cited. The nomination does not provide any information about the condition of the interiors however the SHR Place Report indicates that there are some fittings, fixtures and other built fabric which is of interest because of its rarity and reflection of nineteenth century building and interior design practice. Rarity values will be dealt with under Criterion (b).

Convalescent home history

Thomas Dibbs gifted the Graythwaite property to the Crown in 1915 for the purposes of a convalescent home for returned servicemen. It is claimed that Dibbs's gift was made in response to the "shock at the carnage resulting from the First World War". (Nomination report. p15). Dibbs had pledged, in the Sydney Morning Herald his home for use as a convalescent home for returned soldiers in June 1915, two months after Australian troops landed at Gallipoli. (Nomination report p19). Following his donation the British Red Cross Society (Australian Branch-New South Wales Division) administered Graythwaite as a convalescent hospital from 1916-1977.

At its establishment as a convalescent hospital it had nine wards able to accommodate 49 men. Between 1917 and 1918 some 217 men passed through Graythwaite. The hospital was then focused on long term cases of disablement. Further alterations to the building to meet this purpose enabled the hospital to accommodate 75 patients with a new ward to handle spinal cases. In late 1920 the hospital cared for an average of 30 patients increasing to 50 the following year. In the 1920s the adjacent property Upton Grange was purchased by the Commonwealth Repatriation Department to house trained nurses and resident Voluntary Aides (VADs) working at Graythwaite.

Graythwaite continued to operate as a hospital for the care of injured or disabled veterans up until 1977 when in response to the falling number of servicemen the hospital opened its doors to civil patients. In 1980 the hospital serviced the needs of geriatric patients. Graythwaite is now being used in a minor way for medical purposes. It continues to provide nursing home services however the suitability of the building for this purpose is declining with the changes in contemporary health care services and standards.

Graythwaite's historical associations with its use as a convalescent home for returned soldiers is testimony to the *homefront* experience (part of) in Australia during the First and Second World Wars. It also speaks of the experiences of injured and permanently disabled veterans who returned from war to face often difficult lives adjusting to civilian life and their injuries, which were in some cases, permanent and severe. Graythwaite is also associated with the history of nursing, the work of the Red Cross, the history of philanthropy and volunteerism and the history of the development of repatriation services in Australia.

In the absence of a documented comprehensive contextual history dealing with Graythwaite's historical associations the preliminary research has identified a few historical sources which assist in the assessment of the site. The findings are as follows:

"Nineteenth century military engagements overseas left the Australian colonies largely untouched, with relatively few casualties or long term after effects. Australia's involvement with World War I was a different story. It was not just the number of dead (one in five of all the 300,000 who embarked for service abroad), but with a casualty rate of 64.8 per cent, Australia became a nation of crippled soldiers..... World War II had fewer casualties than the Great War but in many ways the effects of the war (on the homefront) were more far reaching. For example after the fall of Singapore in 1942, Australia became a forward base for US General Macarthur's Pacific operations, women took "mens jobs for the duration", men were conscripted to fight in New Guinea or were allocated to a essential industry positions. The home front never again played such an important or enthusiastic part in the prosecution of Australia's war effort. Indeed from Vietnam on, civilians at home have been spectators in Australia's wars." (Lyons M. and Russell P. : p141-142.).

By 1917 a number of homes throughout New South Wales were being administered by the Red Cross as convalescent hospitals for the care of returned servicemen (AHDB ID 100595). The du Far family homestead for example was made available to the Red Cross in 1915 in order for it to be set up as a convalescent home. (AHDB Lady Davidson Hospital. Place ID 100595). Other homes converted to convalescent hospitals for returned soldiers during the First World War include : Kamesburgh (1918) in Brighton, Victoria; Booloominbah Homestead (during WW I) in Armidale, NSW; Saumarez Homestead (during WWI) in Armidale, NSW; Hathrop (during WWI) in Glanmire, NSW; Lady Galway Home in Adelaide, South Australia and after WWI the Mill in Moss Vale, NSW.

Other buildings in NSW were converted to military hospitals. The then Asylum for Destitute Children, built in 1856 and opened in 1858 in Randwick Sydney for example was converted by the NSW Government in 1915 in order for it to be used as a military hospital. It was renamed the Fourth Australian Repatriation Hospital. This Hospital is now known as the Prince of Wales Hospital. (Prince of Wales Hospital Website. Timeline: History of the Prince of Wales Hospital).

“The casualties from the First World War created a new and ongoing welfare demand. In April 1918 a Repatriation Department was established to administer the majority of government provided benefits. On disbandment of the AIF in March 1921, it took over the Army general hospitals which then became the basis of the Repatriation General Hospitals located in each state. In 1939 there were still 2,000 servicemen from World War I under treatment in Australian hospitals with nearly 50,000 attending as outpatients.” (Doyle. H. p29).

“In October 1939, a month after World War II was declared, military officials estimated that Australia would need 3,000 additional hospitals by 1940 to care for war casualties. Instead of acquiring properties and converting them to hospitals (as had happened in WWI the Department of Defence planned to develop purpose-built military hospitals one in each of the state capitals. Greenslopes Private Hospital in Brisbane is an example of one of these purpose built military hospitals.” (Greenslopes Private Hospital Website: History of the Greenslopes Private Hospital).

Another example of this development of military hospitals is the hospital now known as the Concord Repatriation General Hospital. During the Second World War the Commonwealth Government purchased part of the Yaralla estate in Sydney and built the 113th Australian General Hospital. This hospital cared for many veterans. In 1948 responsibility for the management of the hospital was transferred from the Australian Military Forces to the Repatriation Commission. Its role was to provide health services to entitled veterans and war widows (Concord Repatriation General Hospital Website).

Large private estate homes continued to be converted to convalescent hospitals for returned soldiers at the beginning of the Second World War. Claremont House in Tasmania (Lady Clark Convalescent Home) is an example of this. It was established in 1941 as a convalescent hospital. (Claremont House and Gardens. AHDB. Place ID 17936). Many more Red Cross convalescent homes were established across the nation during the Second World War. (Nomination report p 21).

The nomination did not indicate whether there was any oral history records related to Graythwaite's history as a convalescent hospital nor of patients stories. The nomination did however indicate that there were “many people” who had memories of the soldiers who were cared for at Graythwaite. The Shore School (located next door) also developed an association with Graythwaite. The School established a visiting program for boys as part of the School's community service program. This program was established as early as the 1920s (Flegg. R. 2005).

The magnitude of the extent and social impact of injured soldiers returning to civilian life in Australia is reflected in George Johnston's book *My Brother Jack* (1964). Some text from the first two pages of the book are an illustration:

“ The hallway itself (childhood home), in fact, was far from undistinguished, because a souvenired German gas-mask hung on the tall hall-stand, looking like the head of a captured Martian, and the whole area of the hall was a clutter of walking sticks that relate to injury rather than to elegance-and sets of crutches-the

French type as well as the conventional shapes of bent wood-and there was always at least one invalid wheel-chair there and some artificial limbs propped in the corners. Our sister Jean, who was the eldest of us four children, eventually married a returned soldier (WWI) who had had his leg amputated, and this seemed to us, at the time, quite normal and expected. Jack and I must have spent a good part of our boyhood in the fixed belief that grown-up men who were complete were pretty rare beings-complete, that is, in that they had their sight or hearing or all their limbs. Well, we knew they existed, but they seldom came our way." (Johnston G. 1964. *My Brother Jack*. pp7-8.).

The associations of the site with the Red Cross are assessed against criteria (g).

Red Cross History (Australian War Memorial Website Encyclopedia Entry)

"The Australian Red Cross in two world wars

The International Committee of the Red Cross was formed in 1862. Initially its purpose was to try and find ways of overcoming the inadequacy of army medical services so as to alleviate the suffering of those wounded in armed conflict. Over time it has extended its work to include many forms of humanitarian aid in times of peace and war.

The Australian Red Cross Society (ARCS) was formed just after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, originally as a branch of the the British Red Cross. It is especially remembered in the provision of "comforts" for soldiers overseas. Enormous sums of money were raised, and thousands of women volunteers contributed their time by making vast quantities of clothing: socks, vests, mittens, mufflers, pyjamas and a variety of linen. Items were sent to headquarters located in the state capitals, often using government houses as depots, where, after being sorted and packed by yet more volunteers, they were sent to Britain or the front. The effect of this work for the recipients was to bring comfort in its truest sense, for a seemingly trivial gift of a bar of chocolate or a pair of dry socks could bring the most profound relief for a soldier on the Western Front. From the date of its inception until the armistice the ARCS dispatched 395,695 food parcels and 36,339 clothing parcels.

Between 1914 and 1918 more than £3,500,00 was collected and spent on Red Cross services to the Australian Forces and Empire Forces. Dame Nellie Melba raised more than £90,000 for the sick, wounded and prisoners of war by her Red Cross charity concerts and grand opera in Melbourne.

Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) also provided an important public face for the Australian Red Cross. Young women served in VADs to provide nursing and domestic services in hospitals and convalescent homes. A few served overseas in Britain.

Less well known is the work the Australian Red Cross undertook at an international level by establishing agencies overseas dedicated to supplying families in Australia with information about wounded and missing soldiers, and for providing information about and comfort to soldiers declared prisoners of war.

During the Second World War the Red Cross performed other services as well as the traditional catering, fundraising and medical work. This included welfare work, hospital visiting, vocational training, home help, library services, lorry and ambulance driving. The Red Cross VADs again worked at hospitals and convalescent homes alongside doctors and nurses. Similarly, the Red Cross contributed to the well being of prisoners of war through food parcels and medical attention.

The ARCS has been officially recognised since 1944 as an auxiliary to the medical services of the Defence Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia - Navy, Army and Air Force. The Red Cross still performs humanitarian work in peacetime, including tracing missing persons and prisoners of war."

Condition and Integrity:

Nominator's condition statement

Whilst largely intact itself, several additions have been made over the years to the buildings and the property, in order to provide necessary medical facilities. Maintenance works to Graythwaite have not kept up with demand, and some restoration works are required.

Although *Graythwaite* is sadly in need of extensive conservation works the integrity of the property from the 1820s, through its various periods of change, is highly intact. The boundary represents the original holding of Thomas Dibbs, including the c.1830s residence and stables of *Euroka* built during Thomas Walker's ownership, and later purchased from Sayer's mortgagees in 1873. The c.1830s residence is incorporated with the expanded c.1880 mansion built by Thomas Dibbs, which together with the c.1880s Kitchen wing, stables and outbuilding remain highly intact despite later additions, alterations and adaption. The house retains its c.1880s form and much of its layout, fabric and detail. The stables from both periods retain their original form, construction materials and some detail. Together with significant cultural plantings and archaeological elements the property overall is a fine and intact example of an early substantial estate.

While the buildings, attachments and alterations to the buildings and grounds relating to the use of the property as a hospital and convalescent home detract from the integrity of the Victorian period property, those elements are important in regards to the transfer of ownership of the property by Dibbs in 1914 and use as a convalescent hospital for sick and injured returned servicemen under the administration of the Red Cross Society.

Location:

About 2.5ha, 20 Edward Street, North Sydney, comprising Lot 2 DP539853, including building and grounds.

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