

The History Of:- 18 Vista Avenue, Ringwood East

The Land

The current block located at 18 Vista Avenue was originally part of an 80 acre block granted to R Blood on 12 March 1872. A Wallace Bruce subsequently sold off a portion of this land and on it the Davies family erected the house "Reaghill" shortly after 1909. A 35 acre parcel of this original block was subdivided into 22 lots in June 1955. The subdivision consisted of 15 lots from 1 ½ and 2 ½ acres and seven smaller blocks of about ½ acre fronting Bedford Road.

The 18 Vista Avenue block, then just over 2 acres was purchased by Mr Campbell Boyd, a local pharmacist, in 1956. The purchase price was £1000. Mr Boyd became sick not long after acquiring the land and offered the property, then a bush block, to Dr Arthur G Stephens. Dr Stephens purchased the block for £2,500 in 1959. The block was not immediately built on. Dr and Mrs Stephens said they were not able to afford a new building on the Vista Avenue block at the time, so relocated their house from 302 Maroondah Highway, near the current site of the Maroondah City Council, to the current location on the block.

The garden design was created by Gloria Parker from Park Orchards and included a variety of roses and unusual species of plants.

The House

The house which was built in 1959, was successfully moved in two pieces in 1972, from Maroondah Highway, under the railway crossing at Ringwood East and up Scenic Avenue. The route through the railway crossing on Dublin Road required the removal of the top four feet of roof from the building so it would fit under the overhead wires.

The building was cut along the entrance hall and when put together the join was barely perceptible. The saw cuts on each side of the house when rejoined, were said to have matched exactly. There were originally two brick fireplaces in the house, one in the lounge (an Adams design) and the second in the library. The library fireplace was not reconstructed after the house was relocated. The bricks and bluestone slabs, which form a substantial part of the structure of the formal garden around the house, were salvaged from the demolition of the Burnt Bridge Hotel. Dr Stephens bought 32 truckloads of uncleaned bricks from the demolition contractor for \$1 per load. Presumably the demolition contractor had already been paid to demolish, remove and dump the building rubble by the developer of the Burnt Bridge shopping centre and now was able to on-sell the bricks without the cost of disposal.

These bricks make up the first three feet of the brick wall which encompasses the secret garden. This wall originally marked the start of a terraced area which extended back to the Vista Avenue road frontage. The large bluestone slabs making up most of the steps in the garden were the door steps on the old hotel and the large square rough-made bricks were originally the foundation stones for the stumps of the Burnt Bridge building.

The terraced area and land to the south of the tennis court (the current 16A to 16E Vista Avenue) was sold off to Davis Homes after the nine year covenant expired on the land.