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VICTORIA

"Auburn House",
4 Goodall Street,
HAWTHORN. E2.

Tuesday,
July 15th., 1952.

Robin Boyd Esq.,
158 Riversdale Road,
CAMBERWELL.

Dear Mr. Boyd,

From time to time I see articles published in "The Age" on the early public buildings and homes of Melbourne, and they appear over your signature. They seem to me to indicate an awareness of the fact that there is a 'romance' associated with some of the old buildings and homes which is not shared by their more modern counterparts.

The home from which I write this letter belongs, I cannot help feeling, to the former category. As its name may suggest, the whole area of Hawthorn in which it stands takes its name from the house which was built, so far as I can determine, in 1860. It is exceedingly difficult to piece together the practically non-existent records of those days, but I have established that Robert Hepburn (for whom the home was built) bought the land as early as May 15, 1856.

I am not sure, of course, to what extent the topic is of interest to you, but the purpose of my letter is to tell you that if you consider it justified, I would be quite pleased to let you see the house -- or that part which I occupy (which includes the whole top floor, lower hall and cellars.)

As to its history, popular tradition has it that it was Auburn House which was purchased by subscription and presented to Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. This tradition presumably had its origin in confusion resulting from another nearby house being called 'Auburn Lodge', whose name was changed many years ago (though the house still stands in an adjacent street,) A history of Hawthorn written in the early years of this century adds to the confusion for the writer states that "the Rev. Liddiard built himself a substantial home which he called 'Auburn'" Evidently the Rev. Liddiard built Auburn Lodge, but the name had disappeared and the author, knowing Auburn House, fell into the error of confusing the two houses.

2009 1805

In the Hawthorn Town Hall is a very old map dated 1864, and which clearly marks 'Mr. Hepburn's house' and 'Mr. C.G. Duffy's house'. On another map (which was until recently in an estate agents' office in Hawthorn) and dated 1887, the corresponding sites are shown as 'Auburn House' and 'Auburn Lodge'.

The house was built before the over-ornate 1880's and is therefore very plain, but there may be something about its architecture which reveals its background to one with your knowledge of the subject. I need hardly remark, however, that if the matter lies beyond the orbit of your interest, this letter does not require acknowledgment.

Yours faithfully,

