

# RESIDENCE HAMDEN ROAD - THE C W BALDWIN EGG

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



One of architect Bernard Ridley Walker's drawings for Markree, 1925  
Hobart City Council

## Markree's arts movement roots

writer *Scott Carlin*

One of Hobart's hidden gems, Markree, is a 1926 house, garden and collection of furniture and decorative arts, all reflecting the ethos of the Arts and Crafts Movement, a collective interest decorative and fine arts that flourished in Europe and North America between 1880 and 1910 and in Japan in the 1920s.

Markree was the home of Cecil and Ruth Baldwin, whose son, Henry, bequeathed the property to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Markree and adjacent Red Knights, built for Ruth Baldwin's sister, Hilda Maning, were designed by local architect Bernard Ridley Walker (1884-1957). The two houses were designed to be complementary in terms of their sculptural brickwork, attractive roof scapes, and shingle-clad verandas. The gardens of both properties were laid out by Cecil Baldwin (1887-1961) who had studied at the Burnley School of Horticulture in Melbourne with his brother Tom from 1904 to 1906. After leaving Burnley, Tom and Cecil went



*left Markree and Red Knights, c1926*

*above Cecil, Henry and Ruth Baldwin, c1925*

*photo J Burgess-Watt*

into partnership working as landscape gardeners until they enlisted for service following the outbreak of World War I.

Burnley promoted the gardening style of British Arts and Crafts Movement garden designers William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll, whose influence on Markree's garden is evident in the tension between structure and naturalism, artifice and informality. Markree's layout is based on a central axial path with lattice screens dividing the garden, the kitchen gardens and the compost heap. This formal structure is broken up by gravel paths with stone edgings and dense naturalistic plantings. A striking feature is the c1930s baroque fountain in the form of a triton rising from a rustic pond with rockwork borders

The leading Australian garden designer, Edna Walling, (1895-1973) studied at Burnley about 12 years after Cecil Baldwin, hence their similar planting palettes Walling's signature tree, the silver birch (*Betula pendula*) is represented by old and young specimens in Markree's garden. Cecil Baldwin and Edna Walling were probably acquainted through Walling's Tasmanian com-



*Looking up to Markree house from the garden, c1932 and today*

missions at Sandy Bay and Fern Tree. Edna Walling designed a mountain garden for her friend Eileen Bamford (née Wood), who had also studied at Burnley and later lived at Pillinger Drive, Fern Tree.

An album of views of the Markree garden c1930 shows that relatively little has changed. Cecil Baldwin selected plants that would provide colour and interest with the changing seasons as well as flowers for Ruth to gather for the house. These have been picked out in watercolour by the meticulous but unknown photographer. Garden historian Ann Cripps referenced these when she carried out a gentle restoration of the garden in 2011, gently separating plants that had invaded from other beds to bring back a sense of 'light and shade'.

A charming aspect of the relationship of Markree and Red Knights was the absence of a dividing fence. The two houses formed a family compound. The present posts and chains replaced a series of arches supporting roses, shown in 1930s

views of the garden. Rose arbours were a favoured motif of English Arts and Crafts garden designer, Gertrude Jekyll.

Markree is sheltered by stone walls that predate the house by almost a century. Markree's front boundary wall was built in 1828 by the military using convict labour to subdivide part of Anglesea Barracks' land for villas. These villas, overlooking the town, occupied the slope between Hampden Road and Sandy Bay Road and included Markree's neighbours, Heathfield and Lumeah.

As seen in photographs of the newly completed Markree and Red Knights (on view inside Markree), they were modest 20<sup>th</sup> century villas located within a grander 19<sup>th</sup> century template.

Markree was built on a 1920s subdivision of Heathfield, a veranda'd bungalow built in 1829 by Assistant Commissary General Affleck Moodie. Markree's eastern boundary is Heathfield's original rubble stone perimeter wall. The figs

espaliered against this wall suggest that this may have been in the location of Heathfield's productive garden. The Norfolk Island hibiscus (*Lagunaria patersonia*) also on this boundary is a survivor of the Heathfield estate and a reminder of Tasmania's early connections with Norfolk Island, commemorated in place names such as New Norfolk and the Norfolk Plains. The productive garden established by Cecil Baldwin contains old varieties of apricots (Moorpark), nectarines

(Cardinal), apples (Granny Smith and Democrat), plums, raspberries and strawberries.

Roses are prolific at Markree and their varieties are testament to the age of the garden. Two of the earliest roses are the unidentified mauve damask rose (number 8) and the white moss rose (number 31). Two of noted rose propagator Alister Clark's best-known roses are in the Markree Garden, Sunny South (1918) and Lorraine Lee (1924). Clark (1864-1949) spent his teen years in Hobart.

*Some of the beautiful floral diversity of the Markree garden*



In the spring of 2009, the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery planted the heritage rose Prosperity (number 2I) to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry Baldwin's birth.

For the young Henry Baldwin, the Markree garden was a magical place in which to play. One of Henry's special games was to hide in the old fig tree from his Aunt Hilda who lived next door. Aunt Hilda also played policeman when he rode his tricycle around the garden. As Henry grew older and his health deteriorated, he loved to sit in the upstairs veranda and watch the changing seasons over the garden.

Markree's owners, Cecil and Ruth Baldwin, were clearly highly engaged in the design and beautification of their home, Cecil as garden designer and Ruth (1878-1969) as a craftswoman responsible for the timber desk, bookcase and frame carved with Australian floral motifs within the house. Markree

with its Edwardian garden and combination of Art Nouveau and Art Deco architectural elements, looks both backwards and forwards in terms of style. Ruth, unlike her sisters, married, albeit later in life and Henry Baldwin (1919-2007) was to be an only child. Cecil Baldwin was injured during the war and so landscape gardening was out of the question for him. He returned to work at the Repatriation General Department.

As we commemorate the centenary of World War I, Markree is a place to contemplate its impact on Tasmania's social and architectural fabric. 

*The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery acknowledges the generous assistance of Ann Cripps in researching the history of Markree's garden and Gregg Chandler in identifying the roses.*

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*Stone steps and fountain in the Markree garden*

