

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 22/05/19



## HOUSE & DOCTOR'S SURGERY (FORMER)



Doctors Surgery, 572 Plenty Road



Garage



Doctor's Surgery, 572 Plenty Road Image 2



Doctor's Surgery, 572 Plenty Road, Detail

### Location

572 PLENTY ROAD, PRESTON, DAREBIN CITY

### Municipality

DAREBIN CITY

### Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

### Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO242

### Heritage Listing

Darebin City

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### *What is significant?*

The former Lear House and Surgery, built for Dr Darcy C. Lear at 572 Plenty Road. It was designed by architect Harold Desbrowe-Annear and built 1932-33, just prior to the architect's death in June 1933. It is a substantial two-storey building, which fronts the two streets of its corner site with minimal setbacks and no fence between the footpath and house. It steps down to a single storey wing at the rear, along the Josephine Grove frontage. The house is designed in the Georgian Revival style, and exhibits common features of this type, including its rectilinear massing, formal and symmetrical facades, use of a Palladian window above an entrance porch and Adamesque detail to the exterior and interiors, and Desbrowe-Annear's signature three-sash French windows with a fixed bottom sash to exclude dust and flies. The former uses of the building are indicated by the two entrances. On Plenty Road is a flat-roof entrance porch. Above the doorway is a Rod of Asclepius, indicating a medical use. The residential entry off Josephine Grove is recessive, located within a recessed porch which can be closed off with sliding screen doors. Mail and milk deliveries could be made directly to the kitchen on this side, through timber hatches which survive.

The interior is highly intact and retains more features typical of Desbrowe-Annear's town houses, including plaster moulding panels to the walls and Adamesque mantelpieces. Other elements have a clear relationship with his earlier Arts & Crafts designs, including the diagonal geometry of the entrance hall, the timber staircase, and the 1st floor fireplace with a salt-glazed tile mantelpiece and hearth. At the east end of the Josephine Grove frontage is a two-car garage, designed by Desbrowe-Annear in the same manner as his widely publicised 'Week-End House' plans of which were published in 1922. It has an external timber frame with cross-bracing, and an internal fibro-concrete lining which is visible from the outside. The garage retains one of two original folding ledged garage doors.

### *How is it significant?*

The former Lear House and Surgery and garage at 572 Plenty Road, Preston is of local historic and architectural significance to Darebin City.

### *Why is it significant?*

Historically, the building is significant as it provides evidence of an important phase of suburban development in Reservoir during the Inter-war period both as a dwelling and the provision of an essential service being a medical practice. The use of the building is indicated symbolically by the medical symbol above the surgery entry. It is also significant as a commission by a major architect, Harold Desbrowe-Annear, which is rare in the City of Darebin, and for its associations with Desbrowe-Annear, one of Australia's most important domestic architects. This house illustrates the final years of Desbrowe-Annear's oeuvre, as he died shortly after its completion. (AHC criteria A.4, B.2, H.1)

It is architecturally significant as one of the best examples of inter-war Georgian Revival residential architecture in Darebin, and as a representative example of Harold Desbrowe-Annear's town houses, most of which were built for wealthy clients in Toorak and South Yarra. The significance is enhanced by the high level of intactness, external and internal. The interior of the house is also representative of the Georgian Revival town houses, mixed with the Arts & Crafts details and diagonal planning that Desbrowe-Annear is best known for. (AHC criteria F.1)

The garage both adds to the architectural significance of the site and is of significance in its own right as a very rare surviving example of the externally-framed 'Week-End House' that Desbrowe-Annear publicised in *For Every Man His Home* (1922). While he built an example for himself in Crossover (c1927), this was destroyed by bushfires. The garage is highly intact, apart from the replacement of a garage door, and even retains its original black paint finish. (AHC criteria B.2, E.2)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Darebin - Darebin Heritage Study, Context P/L, 2011;
Construction dates	1932,
Architect/Designer	Annear, Harold Desbrowe,
Other Names	Lear House (Former),
Hermes Number	27130
Property Number	

---

## Physical Description 1

The former Lear House and Surgery is situated on the northeast corner of Plenty Road and Josephine Grove, Preston. It is a substantial two-storey building, erected on a slight diagonal to Plenty Road so that its facade faces due west, but parallel to its Josephine Grove boundary. The house has a very small setback from its two street frontages and there is no fence between the building and the footpath. The house largely delineates the street boundary, continued on the south side by a single-storey wing. At the rear of the Josephine Grove frontage is a double garage. The garden is entered from Plenty Road via an arched gateway in a high rendered wall. The extent of the wall indicates the original size of the garden on the north side of the house, before it was enlarged in 1939.

The main volume of the house is two-storey with a hipped roof covered in varicoloured terracotta tiles. The wide eaves are lined with timber battens. The three chimneys are simple, rendered and rectangular with a narrow band of moulding at the top. The facade, facing Plenty Road, is symmetrical with an enclosed entrance porch at the centre with canted sides, above which is a Palladian window (tall round-headed window between lower rectangular windows, also called a Venetian or Serlian window). These central features are flanked by sash windows: small two-over-two double-hung sash windows affording privacy to the interior, and three-sash French windows to the first floor. Above the entry door is a scrolled broken pediment with a Staff of Asclepius (serpent around a rod), indicating the medical use of the surgery.

The south elevation, facing Josephine Grove, is devoted to residential use. Again, the two-storey mass has a symmetrical arrangement with the entrance at the centre, above which is a small window. At the ground floor, the entrance is flanked by pairs of small two-over-two windows with high sills to afford privacy in such close proximity to the footpath. At the first floor level, pairs of the three-sash French windows are used. The door to the house is within a recessed porch which can be enclosed with the original sliding screen doors. The door itself is heavy, varnished timber with a single panel and an automatic closer.

The house steps down to a single-storey hipped section (over the dining room and part of the lounge) which extends the entire width of the house, then narrows to a lower service wing situated along the Josephine Grove boundary. These rear wings are finished in the same render finish and the same tiled roof. Windows are smaller and simpler.

Most of the windows on the north elevation, facing the garden, are the three-sash French windows. On the rear (east) elevation are the same French windows to the ground floor, and two-over-two sash and fixed circular windows to the first floor, arranged symmetrically around the high hip roof of the rear wing.

The ornamentation of the building is restrained, and limited to a small amount of moulded applied ornament in the Adamesque style - floral garlands at the corners of door and window entablatures, and scrolled broken pediments over the surgery and residence entry doors. An unusual Adamesque element, and a rare survivor, are the window and door screens with a radiating fanlight motif. These are seen on the windows to the surgery porch, and on screen doors to the surgery entry, residential entry and back door. The Palladian window on the facade also has a Adamesque fanlight.

Another unusual detail are the mail and milk delivery hatches in the kitchen wall (south elevation).

Internal features of the house that are characteristic of Desbrowe-Annear's oeuvre or otherwise unusual are: the ground-floor plan radiating out from the central hallway with angled walls to allow access to more rooms, the Arts & Crafts timber staircase, Adamesque plaster wall panelling and mantelpieces in Lounge and Dining Room, sliding doors between Lounge and Dining Room, salt-glazed tiles to all ground-floor hearths, fireplace with tiled mantel and hearth (1st floor), and built-in wardrobes in a 1st floor bedroom.

Internal features of the house that are typical of its era and intact are: the electric call-bell system, kitchen cabinetry, doors and brass hardware, bathroom fittings and fixtures in rear wing, two-tone terrazzo floor and toilet roll holder in 1st floor bathroom.

The house is highly intact externally and internally. The only alterations noted externally is the replacement of the garden gate onto Plenty Road, overpainting of the original cream limewash with a modern paint (though two chimneys have not been overpainted), installation of a new mail slot, removal of a wall-mounted lamp on the west face of the surgery porch, and removal of the scotia moulding beneath the gutters. Internally, some fireplace openings have been covered over or infilled with a heater, a new parquet floor was installed in the dining room (most other floors are carpeted and could not be seen), and there are modern fixtures and appliances in the kitchen.

The garage, at the rear of the site, has a slight setback from Josephine Street, and two large garage doors, one of which is the original folding ledged door. The hip roof is covered in terracotta tiles, and extends to a narrow skillion on the west side. Here the construction of the building is visible from the street: an external timber frame with cross-bracing with the internal fibro-cement lining exposed. From within the garden, the rest of this structure is visible. The timber members are painted with a matte, black finish, possibly Tarsene tar-based paint. Doors into the skillion section are high-waisted, typical of the interwar period.

The garage is intact apart from replacement of one of the garage doors with a modern roller door.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*