**203 BEECROFT ROAD, BEECROFT (“Edensor”)**

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Lot 13 DP 844078

**Hornsby Shire Council details**

**Heritage Register: Item No. 268 (House + Garden, Stable and Wall)**

A Federation style house, built circa 1890-1900.

**THE LAND**

“In December 1889 Charles William Holloway of Gladesville purchased at the Field of Mars Common auction for £58, Portion 499, five and a quarter-acres of land running north east from Beecroft Road to Carlingford Road, later The Crescent, and south of Cheltenham Road.

*[Mr. Holloway was a landscape gardener employed at the Gladesville Asylum and was active in the Horticultural Society in Sydney.]*

In July 1892 Holloway sold the land to Catherine Rattray, wife of George Allan Rattray, a bank official of Croydon. The Rattrays began building a small brick cottage on the land. In 1907 Catherine Rattray sold the property to William Henry Harris, and, as well, a small triangular quarter acre block (Portion 494) adjoining, which she had purchased in 1893.”**1**

“203, *Edensor* is the Harris Estate. The house can only be partially seen, as can but a small portion of the very beautiful gardens that continue to be so well maintained and have been a feature of this property since it was occupied by three generations of the Harris family.

In 1906 William Harris purchased this land which had a cottage on it. Harris gradually expanded his land holdings and also expanded the house. Most of the extensive alterations to the house took place in 1914-15. They were designed by local architect William Nixon and the builder was Arthur Doust. It was built on stone foundations with deep verandahs of dressed stone on three sides, with a substantial slate roof.

The name *Edensor* came from the Harris family farm west of Cabramatta that William Harris managed as a young man. The family is connected with Surgeon John Harris of the early years of the Colony and had substantial land holdings in Ultimo and Pyrmont as well as ownership of the Harris Tea Company.

Formal gardens and gravel paths were laid out around the house including rare ornamental trees and some 3000 rose bushes in several large rose beds. A bowling green was constructed on the southern side of the house (now the site of later houses fronting Lyne Road) and much used by William Harris and his friends despite the Recreation Club being next door. A wall of Pyrmont sandstone blocks was built along the Beecroft Road and Lyne Road boundaries. Pyrmont stone was also used in veranda foundations and the trellised walk.

Close to Beecroft Road, and easily seen from the public footpath, are the stables. This is a large timber construction with clerestory roof, and housed the groom’s quarters as well as various bays for feed, harnesses and the horses. William Harris kept trotting horses as a hobby as well as riding horses for pleasure. The stables are connected to the house by an elegant stone pergola in an Edna Walling style design.

Next to the stable and abutting the drive (originally the tradesman’s entrance but now the only vehicular access) is the decorative brick wall of the glass house.

Following his death in 1953 this property passed to his third (and surviving) wife. Mollie was a keen gardener and the gardens were well known for both their beauty and as the setting for many charitable events. Some included a Scottish band that played up the drive from the station. Mrs Harris created a number of residential subdivisions which were sold. These subdivisions were designed to retain the setting of the house surrounded by its grounds. Following Mollie’s death in 1990 their daughter (Julie) remained in the property until 1995 when it was sold to the current owner who has considerably renovated the property and maintained the extensive remnant gardens.”**2**

In January 1907 it was reported that “Mrs. Rattray has disposed of her fine residence and grounds at Cheltenham, the purchaser being Mr. W. H. Harris, of Edensor Park, near Liverpool, who, with his family, will be taking up his residence in the new home in a few weeks. Mrs. Rattray is going to live at Berowra.”

*[Mr. G. A. Rattray is first mentioned as being a resident of Cheltenham in April 1899, when his fox terrier was run over and killed.*

*In September 1901 he advertised for sale a weatherboard cottage, consisting of 5 rooms, hall, bathroom, laundry, verandahs on 3 sides, city water, land 85 x 150, near Cheltenham station.*

*In January 1902 he advertised for sale a cottage of 5 rooms and 2 acres of land, opposite Cheltenham station. This had been offered to let in 1901, and was again in 1903.*

*In July 1902 there was also offered to let a large roomy cottage and 5 acres of land, opposite Cheltenham station.*

*In October 1904 a furnished cottage, with 5 acres of land was for let.*

*This last-mentioned property most likely became “Edensor.”]*

The Mount Pleasant Estate – Cheltenham (1st Subdivision) 1908 shows the house being occupied by Mr. W. H. Harris.

The 1913 Electoral Roll lists the following occupants at “Edensor” - William Henry Harris (independent), Ada Margaret Harris (dom. duties), Maria Louisa Galton (housekeeper), John Robinson (labourer), Francis Shanley (labourer)

*[In 1903-4 Ada Margaret Harris was living at “Edensor Park”, Liverpool. She was related to William H. Harris in some way.]*

William Henry Harris (junior) was born in 1874, Sydney, the child of William Henry (died 1893) & Susan Mary Newton Harris (died 1921).

Upon his father’s death, he received an annuity and one farm at Cabramatta. He would later inherit the family home, “Livingstone House,” in Harris-street, Ultimo, upon the death of his mother. His father’s estate was valued at £91,445.

Sands Directories 1915-1932/3 William Harris Edensor

Electoral Roll 1933: William Harris Edensor

In 1922 William married Ada Margaret Tonkin, in the district of St. Peters.

In 1930 William’s wife Ada died at a private hospital, aged 54 years.

*She was buried with her husband’s parents at Rookwood General Cemetery - Presbyterian Section 1B, Grave 1722.*

In 1932 he married Alice May Carter, in the district of Woollahra.

Occupants of “Edensor” in 1932 were William Henry Harris (Ind. Means), Alice May Harris, Florence May Matthews & William James Whelan (groom)

In October 1932, Florence May Matthews, 21, was reported missing. In March 1933 her skeleton was found in a lonely marsh at Narrabeen. Whether murder or suicide could not be determined.

‘The girl's father, William Henry Matthews, a war pensioner, of Berwick-street. Guildford, said she was born on February 4, 1911. Her mother had been dead 11 years, and in 1923 Mr. Harris adopted her. She had suffered from meningitis as a child.’

"I had known the girl since she was adopted by her aunt, in 1923," said Dr. N. J. Davis, of Beecroft. "I treated her professionally. She was inclined to be very reserved and quiet, somewhat morose. She had not much initiative in regard to conversation. I would hardly say she had the intelligence of a girl aged 21. She was slightly subnormal."

Her remains were buried at Rookwood Cemetery on 3rd March 1933.

In 1936 William’s 2nd wife, Alice May, died at a private hospital. She left a son from her previous marriage, William George Carter.

*She was buried at Rookwood General Cemetery (Presbyterian Section 1E, Grave No. 79) with her son William George Carter.*

In 1937 the occupants of “Edensor” were William Henry Harris (independent means) & William James Whelan (groom)

William Harris married Mary Eileen Cooney in 1938, at Sydney.

In 1942 a child (Julie) was born to the couple.

In 1943 the property was occupied by William Henry Harris (independent means), Mary Eileen [Mollie] Harris, & William James Whelan (groom)

In 1944 a 2nd child was born, Susan Mary Harris, who died the following year, aged 8 months.

In 1953 William Henry Harris died at hospital, leaving his widow, Mollie, and daughter Julie. He was mentioned as the only son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Harris, of Ultimo, brother of Ada, Lily, Blanche and Didie, and loved uncle of Eric Matthews.

*He was buried at Rookwood General Cemetery (Presbyterian Section 5G, Grave No. 613) with his 3rd wife Mary Eileen.*

In 1993, the property known as “Edensor” at 203 Beecroft-road, Cheltenham, was placed under Section 130 of the Heritage Act 1977.

**Bibliography:**

1 “Houses of Hornsby Shire, Volume II, 1880-1938” by Helen Barker Beecroft

2 Cheltenham Heritage Walks - Beecroft-Cheltenham History Group Inc. 2004 book (1st edition)

**Resources available (varies):**

* Sands Directories 1858-1933 City of Sydney [Sands Postal Directory | City of Sydney Archives (nsw.gov.au)](https://archives.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/495003)
* Newspaper articles – TROVE - [Search - Trove (nla.gov.au)](https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers)
* Ancestry.com (subscription only) [Genealogy, Family Trees and Family History Records online - Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com.au/) – Sands Directories, Electoral Rolls, Family photos (Public Member photos), Census lists, marriage details, + miscellaneous
* N.S.W. Births, Deaths & Marriages [Family history search | NSW Government](https://www.nsw.gov.au/family-and-relationships/family-history-search) (QLD & Victoria also obtainable online)
* House photos and information via Hornsby Shire Council website for Property Search and Heritage Register [Heritage | Hornsby Shire Council (nsw.gov.au)](https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/property/build/heritage)
* House photos and associated information via Internet search on address via Real Estate websites (from 2005)
* “Beecroft and Cheltenham Heritage Walks” - Beecroft-Cheltenham History Group Inc. 2004 book (1st edition)
* Australian War Museum website [Home | Australian War Memorial (awm.gov.au)](https://www.awm.gov.au/)
* Beecroft and Cheltenham History Group website [Beecroft and Cheltenham History - Beecroft Cheltenham History Group (bchg.org.au)](https://bchg.org.au/)