

# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** Bellevue Lodge  
**Other names:** Flats

**Citation No:**  
**2443**

**INSERT MAP**



**Address:** 340-342 Carlisle Street, Balaclava

**Heritage Precinct:** Not applicable

**Category:** Residential: Flats

**Heritage Overlay:** TBC

**Style:** Postwar: Modernist

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1958-1959

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** Frederick Gardiner

**Amendment:** TBC

**Comment:** New citation

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## Significance

### *What is significant?*

Bellevue Lodge at 340-342 Carlisle Street, Balaclava, designed by Frederick Gardiner and built 1958-59 for Samuel Alexander W Congdon, is significant.

The three-storey cream brick building is comprised of 12 flats. At the front is a prominent circulation unit with a flat roof which features the name Bellevue Lodge in raised metal lettering in a cursive script. The main block, which is parapeted at the front, consists of three stepped units with separate skillion roofs clad in corrugated sheet metal. The three bays are angled slightly north-westwards, that is towards the sun, and a series of triangular spaces are created under the long gallery/verandahs which have steel-balustrading and poles and timber-screening (brise-soleil) attached at the upper part. The windows are steel-framed fixed panes and casements. The façade is distinguished by an oriel bay to the third level, a window type which is also employed across that level on the west and north elevations. The dark brown colour scheme to the metal and timber elements (windows, doors and fences) may be original. There is also a small laundry block at the north-east corner attached at the north-east corner of the building.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

Bellevue Lodge at 340-342 Carlisle Street, Balaclava, is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### Why is it significant?

Bellevue Lodge is historically significant as being demonstrative of the extensive flat building that has characterised much of the 20th century history of the municipality but especially the southern parts and which gained pace after World War II when the demand for flat development in the area, recognised as Melbourne's flat epicentre, was especially great. The flat typology, commonly architect-designed, imbued the area with a progressive character. The site is also significant in that it reflects a common land development circumstance in this part of the municipality whereby a substantial Victorian period villa, formerly on a larger allotment, was replaced with a block of flats. (Criterion A)

Bellevue Lodge is of aesthetic significance as an intact and distinctive block of cream brick flats from the latter part of the post-World War II period. It is indicative of the approach to Modernism that evolved circa mid to late 1950s/early 1960s in which roofs were typically flat, though a few were skillion, and splayed or triangular forms were often employed by the most progressive architects, upsetting the orthodoxy of the strict rectangular geometry that had previously prevailed. The geometry of the building is comprised of a complex interplay of staggered and angled units which are oriented to take best advantage of the sun. (Criterion E)

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## Thematic context

### Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

### Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.5 Higher-density housing)

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## History

### Contextual history

The early twentieth century saw a marked decline in the viability of large mansions across Melbourne's suburbs in general, but it was particularly felt in the more affluent inner southern suburbs such as St Kilda and Brighton, where land was highly sought-after by a new generation of homebuilders seeking smaller detached dwellings, duplexes or flats. The trend toward higher-density living in St Kilda began with the conversion of mansions and terrace houses into boarding houses in the early 1900s and continued with the first purpose-built flats that appeared at the beginning of World War I. A 1919 newspaper article noted:

*It was held to be no longer necessary to labour with a house and all the domestic drudgery that entailed when by borrowing Continental ideas, people who could afford it could live in flats... Land has become so valuable the villa of the Victorian days, in a crowded thoroughfare, no longer shows anything like an adequate return of interest on the land's present capital value. It is more profitable to pull the house erected thereon down, and to erect flats. When the flat became popular in England the experiment was made in St Kilda, and it did not take long to discover there was a genuine demand for flats (Pahran Telegraph, 18 October 1919, p.4)*

Higher-density housing in the form of boarding houses paved the way to flat development. Flats first appeared in Melbourne around 1906 and slowly spread to the suburbs. They followed a strong pattern of development, appearing close to transport routes, particularly along or within walking distance of tram routes, to allow easy travel to the city. With their proximity to the beach and parklands, good public transport networks and seaside character, the suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood were especially popular locations for flats. Flats became a dominant characteristic of St Kilda and Elwood, and still make up a high percentage of dwellings in those areas. They include some of the earliest surviving flats in Melbourne, some

of the best examples of architectural styles and types of flats, and as a group demonstrate the increasing popularity of the lifestyle of flat living from the early twentieth century (TEH).

There was huge growth in flat development in St Kilda and Elwood in the 1920 and 1930s, attracting migrants, single people, and people of diverse sexuality. In 1920 there were 527 purpose-built flats in 92 blocks in St Kilda municipality. By 1925 this had increased to 884 flats in 164 blocks, including large complexes such as the Ardoch flats in Dandenong Road. By 1935, despite a slowing of development due to the Great Depression, there were more than 2,800 flats in over 500 blocks. A further 2,000 flats were added by 1940; however, the onset of World War II slowed development. Nonetheless, by 1947 St Kilda contained 5,500 purpose-built flats, a quarter of all flats in Melbourne (TEH).

Another boom in flat-building began in the mid-1950s. This was fuelled by population growth and a housing shortage after World War II, changes to building codes and the introduction of company title (and later stratum and strata-title) that enabled flats to be sold individually as 'own your own' units (TEH).

During the early 1950s, a crisis was developing as the number of permits being issued was woefully inadequate however – in 1952, the St Kilda municipality issued 6 permits (of 42 across the city) for 49 units and (Argus, 1 March 1954, p10)

*The erection of more blocks of flats is one of the most urgent housing needs of Melbourne.*

*Agents find it impossible to meet the big inquiry for this type of home.*

In an article entitled, 'St Kilda Grows as Flat Centre' the zeitgeist was captured (Argus, 27 April 1956, p17)

*In recent years the major portion of new building work in St. Kilda has been in flats, and this will continue.*

*The district can still do with many more flats to meet the demand of the big floating population associated with a quickly growing city like Melbourne.*

*St. Kilda has all the advantages for flat life of a big city. It is well-served by transport from and to the city – less than four miles distant.*

*Shops have developed to meet the needs of "flatites;" and there are now numerous cafes serving meals at all hours.*

*Real estate agents have- waiting lists of tenants for flats and apartments of all kinds.*

*... A feature of real estate activity in St. Kilda at present is the sale, of "own-your-own" flats. Since it has become possible for each flat owner to have a certificate of title, sales have been made more freely.*

*The buildings which are being subdivided in this manner must be of modern construction with concrete floors, and comply with certain regulations.*

*... New Australians are reported to be showing, interest in this form of home ownership.*

*... Investors are showing a renewed interest in blocks of flats, and are reported to be buying where the net return is below bank interest rate. They regard the present return as a minimum.*

Between 1961 and 1971, flats increased from 38% to 62% of all dwellings in St Kilda. The boom in flat building saw St Kilda's population increased by 10,000 people at a time when the populations of other inner-city suburbs were declining (TEH).

### 340-342 Carlisle Street

The subject site formed part of Crown portion 153B, Parish of Prahran, County of Bourke. The four-acre allotment was purchased post June 1857 by W Kesterson (PP).

The MMBW plan dated 1898 shows that the corner of Carlisle Street and Orange Grove was occupied by a large block (which extended about half the length of Orange Grove) containing a two-storey brick residence, named *The Grove*, which was the home of estate agent Hugh Peck. At the rear there was an orchard and fowl yards.

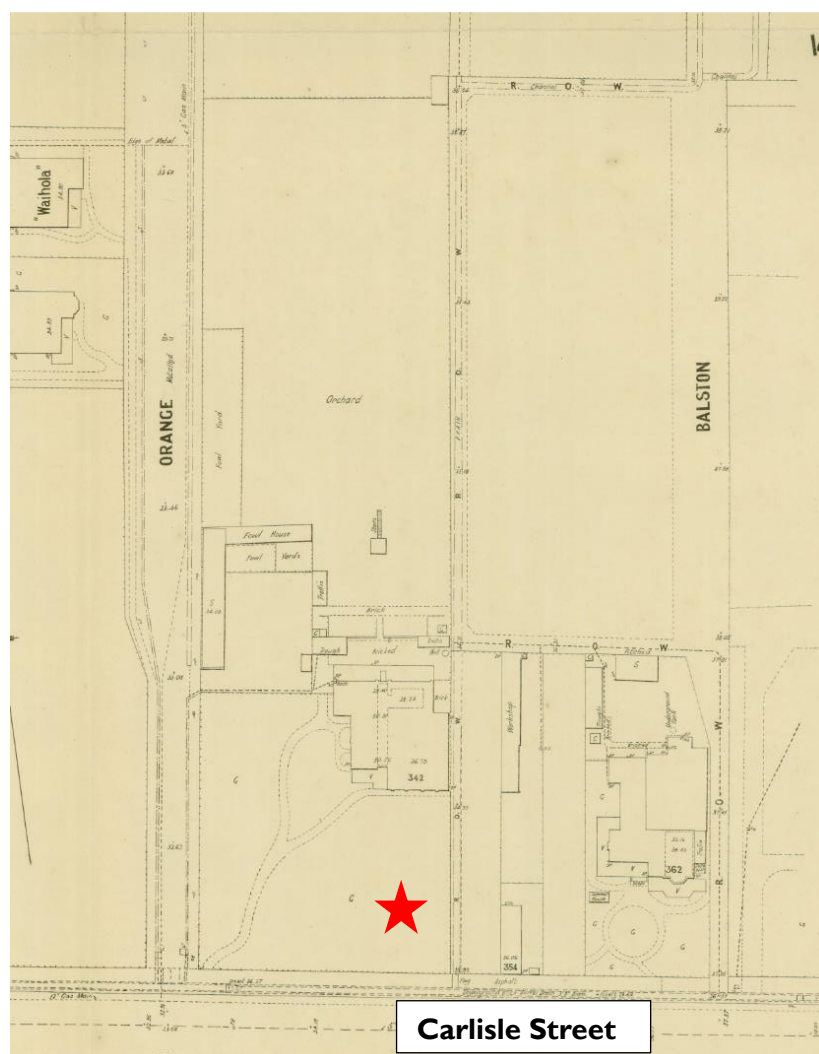


Figure 1 - MMBW detail plan no. 1426, dated 1898. The approximate location of the subject site is indicated by a red star. (Source: SLV)

In the 1920s the orchard area was subdivided and developed with houses fronting Orange Grove, while the 19<sup>th</sup> century residence, renamed *Sidcote*, was divided into six residential flats (Argus 30 Nov 1921 p2).

In the late 1930s or early 1940s the 19<sup>th</sup> century residence was demolished, and further subdivision and development occurred. Blocks of flats were built at 31 and 33 Orange Grove in 1940-41 (BP 10566 and 10858) and a combined residence and doctor's surgery was built at 338 Carlisle Street in 1941 (BP 10892).

In 1945 the subject site was acquired by the Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Melbourne (CT v.6547 f.202). At this time, as shown in the 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 2), the site was vacant.



Figure 2 - Aerial photograph dated 1945 (Source: Landata, Proj No 5, Run 17E, Frame 58014)

In 1958, ownership of the subject site was transferred to Samuel Alexander W Congdon, of 12 Bellevue Terrace Pascoe Vale, who was an engineer (ER). (It seems likely that Congdon's Bellevue Terrace address was the probable inspiration behind the name Bellevue Lodge.) The same year, plans were prepared for a three-storey flat building (containing 12 flats) and six carports by architect Frederick Gardiner, of 902 Malvern Road Armadale (Figure 4). Council issued a permit on 2 October 1958 (BP 57/442) and the estimated cost was £28,000. The builder was to 'be advised' on the permit application. According to the notes and computations by the surveyor, the site was located in Council brick area B where there was no storey limit (Council By-law 135).

The building had been completed by September 1959 when an advertisement was placed in the Age for 'Bellvue Lodge, 12 Modern Flats' for lease (Figure 3). The advertisement mentions carports, suggesting that these were built as proposed, however a 1986 aerial photograph shows that they had already been removed by this time.



Figure 3 - Age, 19 September 1959, p48



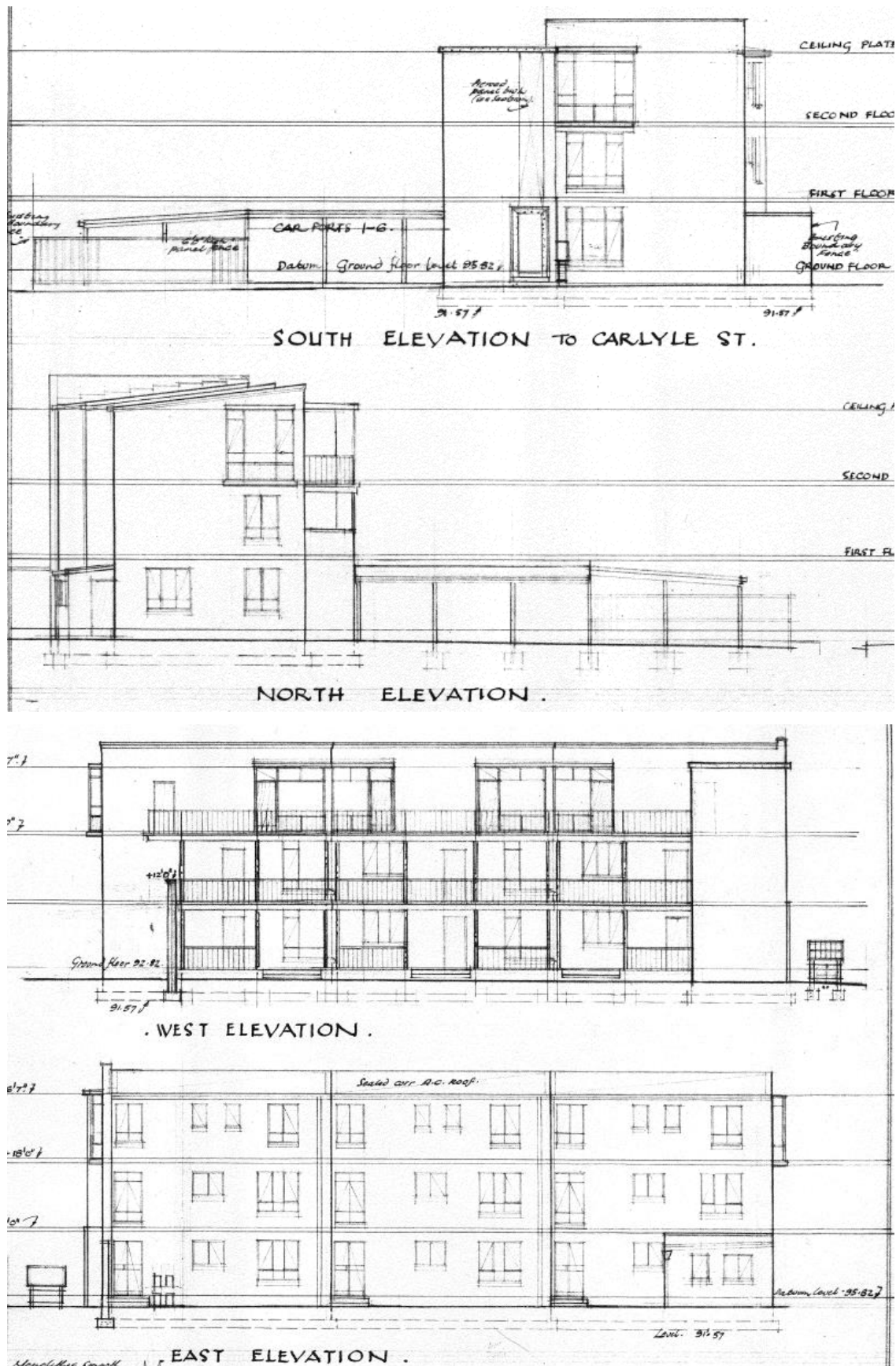


Figure 4 - Elevations for Bellevue Lodge (Frederick Gardiner, dated August 1958). (Source: Council Building File)

## References

Certificates of Title (CT)

Council Building File

Electoral Rolls (ER)

Newspapers, various

Parish Plan - at Elwood, Parish of Prahran, P81-13 (PP)

*Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH)*, February 2021

St Kilda Council Building Permits (BP)

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## Description

Bellevue Lodge is located to the east end of the large, flat site of about 1000m<sup>2</sup>. Small garden areas are provided in the south-west corner, including an established deciduous tree, and the north-east corner. There is an area of original concrete paving to the front near the entrance and crossover and an asphalted area for car parking (identified as compacted gravel on the drawings). A slatted timber fence extends along most of the front perimeter and the letter box unit near the entrance is similarly timber-framed.

The walls of the three-storey building are cream brick laid in stretcher bond though surmounted by a rowlock course, projecting to the front parapet and flush to the garden wall. A breeze-block screen or the like was proposed above the doorway of the front of the circulation block but not included.

The block contains twelve flats with the lower two levels each accommodating three, two-bedroom flats (six in total) and the third level with six, one-bedroom flats. There is also small laundry block at the north-east corner attached at the north-east corner of the building and the screen wall extends from the façade to the east boundary providing privacy for the courtyards on that side.

The building appears to have a prismatic form however its geometry is comprised of a complex interplay of staggered and angled units, creating triangular spaces where it is offset from orthogonal alignments. These configurations are partly concealed by the plane/parapet of the façade wall, which does not align with the front boundary.

To the front south-west corner is a circulation unit which has a square footprint and a flat roof with a narrow soffit lined in sheeting, narrow fascia and eaves gutter. Its roof sits below the top of the adjacent parapet of the main block. The name of the building – Bellevue Lodge – is identified in raised metal lettering in a cursive script to its front wall. The stepped entrance unit sits slightly forward with a timber architrave and a small garden bed with a concrete kerb defines the front corner.

The main block consists of three units, which step down the site towards the rear, with separate skillion roofs clad in corrugated sheet metal. The three bays are angled slightly north-westwards, that is towards the sun, and a series of triangular spaces are created under the long gallery/verandahs whose western edge is aligned with the property boundary on that side. The galleries have steel-balustrading and poles, breaking at the ground level in front of entrances to the flats, and timber-screening (brise-soleil) attached at the upper part (similar to the boards employed to the front fence). At the north end, there is a cream brick screen wall to the ground level continued upwards to become the balustrade at the middle level.

The windows are steel-framed, with fixed panes and casement, in larger units to south and west elevations than to the east elevation. The façade is distinguished by an oriel bay to the third level, a window type which is also employed across that level on the west and north elevations.

The dark brown colour scheme to the metal and timber elements (windows, doors and fences) may be original.



## Comparative analysis

The southern parts of the municipality – St Kilda East, St Kilda, Balaclava and Elwood - have manifold Post-war flats. Whilst many are generic, there is a relatively high concentration of distinctive examples. Many of the latter are architect-designed examples, although builders/developers with draughting services were responsible for some. Among the architects, several Australian-born architects were responsible for flats but rarely multiple examples. This circumstance contrasts with a group of émigrés who were active in the area and at the forefront of the evolution of this building type, often working for Jewish clients and accommodating the influx of Central and Eastern European Jewish refugees who were accustomed to apartment living, and included Mordecai Benshemesh, Michael R E Feldhagen, Dr Ernest Fooks and Kurt Popper.

The subject building is representative of the approach to Modernism that evolved during the end of the Postwar period – circa mid to late 1950s/early 1960s. Moving further into the 1960s, there was a shift to what is often defined as the late 20<sup>th</sup> century period, when the influence of Brutalism becomes apparent in the bolder forms and use of brown brick. Although cream brick was also common during the earlier phase of the Postwar period, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, a Functionalist mode held sway at that time with parapets and steel-framed windows. From about the mid-1950s, whilst roofs were typically flat, they were usually expressed with soffits, often deep, and openings were typically timber-framed. At this time, splayed or triangular forms were often employed by the most progressive architects, upsetting the orthodoxy of the strict rectangular geometry that had previously prevailed.

Among the contemporary work of the Australian-born architects and designers, there is some comparison with the first three blocks as some triangular or splayed geometry has been incorporated.

- *Chudleigh Court*, 9 Dickens Street, Elwood, 1958, Bailey and Tilley Home Plan Service (Citation 2426, recommended HO). The three-storey, cream brick block has a skillion roof form with triangular projections and balconies on the east (garden) elevation. The garden side openings are timber-framed, whereas steel-framed windows are employed to the gallery side. The metal balustrading features a triangular pattern.
- Flats, 33 Pine Avenue, Elwood, 1959, Leslie J W Reed (Citation 2339, HO429). Cream brick, tile-clad hipped roof, with a flat roof, stairwell block to the front, like that of Bellevue Lodge. Other similarities are the balustrading, the use of screen walls, and a splayed profile to the upper-level balconies. The windows are however timber-framed, including spandrels to the facade.
- Townhouses, 21 Redan Street, St Kilda, 1958, John & Phyllis Murphy (Citation 785, HO503). An unusual two-storey red brick building, consisting of two-level flats with separate entries, with a prow-like form and wide gable roof, clad in sheet metal. Triangular forms are employed under the encompassing roof to provide privacy.
- Flats, 39 Southey Street, Elwood, 1959, L.G. Grant & Associates (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs precinct) Flat roof, cream brick with extensive use of decorative brickwork and screens to the front, as well as a bowed concrete canopy to the entrance supported on steel poles.
- Flats, 63-69 Tennyson Street, Elwood, 1959-60, A V Jennings (Citation 2344, HO436). A series of four mirrored blocks in cream brick with flat roofs, stepped form with undercroft carparking supported by piloti, and banks of windows with spandrels.
- *Rocklea Gardens*, 46-40 Hotham Street, St Kilda East, 1960, designed by Theodore Berman. (Citation 2017, HO293). International style, flat roof, continuous band of windows/openings with balconies, and spandrel panels at either end of the elongated façade.

Several blocks of flats designed by the Palestinian-born, Australian educated architect Mordecai Benshemesh are included within the heritage overlay (with others yet to be assessed). The group



constructed in 1960 bear comparison with *Bellevue Lodge* in the consistent use of splayed forms/triangular geometry.

- The earlier examples, dating to 1951 - *Burnett Lodge* at 9-11 Burnett Street, St Kilda (Citation 2444, HO5 precinct) - and to 1956 - *Barkly Lodge*, 289 Barkly Street, St Kilda (Citation 2444, HO35). Both are overtly Functionalist in their cuboid volumetric expression with taller, separate circulation zones, parapeted roofs rather than having a wide eaves overhang, and steel-framed windows.
- Two notable blocks were completed in 1959. The iconic *Edgewater Towers* at 12 Marine Parade, St Kilda (Citation 2049) and another at 22 Westbury Street (contributory within HO6 precinct). The former is in a different category, as it is a multi-storey International style building in white painted concrete with continuous bands of glazing to each elevation. The latter bears some similarities with the subject site in the general material palette but has a flat roof and circulation is by glazed stairwells, which serve to separate adjacent balconies and so provide some privacy for neighbouring occupants.
- Group of three at 306 Dandenong Road (*Leaworra*), 16 Lansdowne Road and 8 Westbury Street (*Wolverton*), St Kilda East, 1960 (Citation 2429). All three buildings are intact and three storey, have cream brick walls and flat roofs with wide, sheet-lined soffits to the front/main elevations, and timber-framed openings. They have balconies with angled geometry either in the vertical (canted) or horizontal (splayed) plane orientated to take best advantage of the solar access and the site configuration. The stairwells have louvred glass. Decorative elements or treatments include ceramic tiling, some panels to the balustrades, projecting bricks, and/or staggered glazing bars to the windows. All retain their original low cream brick fence and associated letter box enclosures. The circulation is different in that the flats are divided into blocks with either two or three enclosed stairwells (at the front) rather than the open stairs and galleries to *Bellevue Lodge*.

Locally based, Slovakian-born Ernest Fooks (originally Fuchs) designed many buildings in the municipality, but to date only a few of these have been recognized within the heritage overlay, though several are currently under review.

- *Park View*, 5 Herbert Street, St Kilda, 1958-59 (Citation 2427). This example reflects a similar approach evident at *Bellevue Lodge*. Triangular/splayed balconies have been employed to create private zones however in the case of *Park View* the stepped configuration was primarily to optimise views of the Botanic Gardens opposite. The circulation is similarly along external galleries.
- Flats, 5 May Street, Elwood 1957. Cream brick, two storey flats with a tiled hip tile roof, in a U-plan around a central garden courtyard. Typically Fooksian elongated window proportions with some larger mullions and coloured spandrels. Concrete balconies with metal balusters.
- Flats, 12 Milton Street, Elwood 1961 (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs Precinct). Intact, cuboid form being slightly stepped at the front, cream brick with spandrels and elongated window proportions. Similar to *Park View* but on a narrower site.
- Flats, 21A Dickens Street, Elwood, 1966 (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs Precinct). Later brown brick and render, suggesting a burgeoning Brutalist character.
- Flats, 17 Cowderoy Street, St Kilda 1947+ 1966 (Citation 880, HO444 precinct). Unknown designer of 1947, initially two storey with a hipped roof. Extensively altered in 1966 by Fooks to become a three-storey flat roof building with a Moderne character.

The work of the Viennese Kurt Popper is generally indicative of a restrained version of contemporary Modernism: Although his contemporary work shares a similar material palette, he generally employed more contained footprints and forms.

- Flats, 124-126 Alma Road, 1954 + 47 Westbury Street, St Kilda, 1956 (Contributory within HO6). Similar, adjacent blocks in a Functionalist mode. Cream brick (one on red brick plinth), with parapeted roof, steel-framed windows, some with concrete framing, and balconies with concrete decks and metal railing.

- Flats, 22A Acland Street, St Kilda, 1957 (Contributory within HO5). Three storey, rectangular footprint with corner balconies with metal balustrading with diamond pattern (to the front). Cream brick with panels of large, pale blue tiles to the façade. It however has a tile clad, hipped roof.
- Flats, 17 & 17A Burnett Street, St Kilda 1958-59 (Contributory within HO5). More conventional with a hipped roof clad in tile in two mirror-image blocks. Distinguished by the expressed rendered frame to the corner windows.
- Flats, 21 Dickens Street, Elwood, 1965 (Contributory within St Kilda Botanical Gardens & Environs Precinct). A relatively late cream brick example with minimal eaves overhang as the balconies, with faceted metal panels to the balustrade, are recessed.

The work of Michael R.E. Feldhagen forms a discrete sub-group, which is not readily comparable to the work of his contemporaries. His flat architecture is often distinguished by the use breeze block and other contrasting materials to create more varied and decorative exteriors, usually in a Featurist mode:

- Flats/duplex, 247-249 Inkerman Street, Balaclava, 1962 (Citation 2025, HO315 precinct). A two storey, Featurist example with concrete Roman bricks and paneled concrete.
- Surf Side, 46 Ormond Esplanade, Elwood, 1963-64 (Citation 755, HO353), Bichrome brick – cream and brown – with steel poles and railing. Breeze block on the balconies. Also has a stepped footprint to maximise views of the bay.
- Flats, 99 Westbury Street, Balaclava, 1963 (Citation 2445) – Featurist, wider upper floor with stacked concrete Roman bricks and decorative concrete panels, over a cream brick base.

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## Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

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## Recommendations

Add to the Heritage Overlay as an individual place. Specific controls are not required.

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## Primary source

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2*, 2020

## Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

## Other images



*East side and façade*



*West side and entrance*



## Area to be included in HO

