

# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** Yvonfuray  
**Other names:** Flats

**Citation No:**  
**933**



**Address:** 30 Tennyson Street, Elwood

**Category:** Residential: Flats

**Style:** Interwar: Mediterranean

**Constructed:** 1934

**Designer:** Leslie J.W. Reed

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

**Heritage Precinct:** St Kilda  
Botanical Gardens & Environs

**Heritage Overlay:** HO7

**Graded as:** Significant

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

## Significance

### What is significant?

Yvonfuray, designed by architect Leslie J.W. Reed and built in 1934 for Alice Posner at 30 Tennyson Street, Elwood is significant. Yvonfuray is a two-storey rendered brick block of flats in the Mediterranean-style. The rendered brick front fence, privet hedge and the mature Bhutan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*) are contributory elements.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

### How is it significant?

Yvonfuray at 30 Tennyson Street, Elwood is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### Why is it significant?

Yvonfuray is of aesthetic significance, as a large complex of rendered brick, inter-war, flats finely executed in the Mediterranean-style. The massing of the flats is typical of this style with cuboid forms surmounted by hip roofs with deep eaves, the roofs clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. Detailing on the flats synonymous with the Mediterranean-style includes (on the broader section at right) wall openings with corbels at their heads, and a small balcony on the first floor with a wrought iron railing with a geometric pattern set between piers, accessed from a pair of multi-paned glazed doors. The bay at left, although smaller and plainer in detailing, does share similar materiality and massing, and detailing including the geometric pattern of glazing in the upper sashes of windows. Contributing to the aesthetic significance of the flats is its landscaped

setting, including the privet hedge set behind a low rendered brick fence, and the Bhutan cypress adjacent to the north boundary. (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 (Prahman 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).

## Yvonfuray

This area surrounding the St Kilda Botanic Gardens has been a desirable residential neighbourhood since the gardens were first established in 1860 and by the end of the nineteenth century Blessington, Tennyson, Dickens and Herbert streets were lined with substantial villas, and mansions set in large grounds.

With proximity to tram routes along Carlisle Street and Brighton Road, and access to the beach, public gardens and shopping centres, as well as the nearby St Kilda Primary School in Brighton Road, this area became a popular location for flats and some of the first flats in St Kilda were constructed here towards the end of World War I. These included Clarendon, designed by Joseph Plottel and constructed in 1915 at 26-28 Blessington Street, and two blocks by Howard Lawson at 44 (Clairvaux) and 46 Blessington Street, constructed in 1917. Some of the early mansions such as St Albans (74 Blessington Street) and Himalaya (10 Tennyson Street) were also converted to flats around this time.

In 1897, this property was part of the grounds of Rotherfield, the Italianate mansion designed by Twentyman & Askew and constructed in 1891 for Joseph C. Syme (MMBW). Rotherfield was sold after Syme's death in 1917, and the grounds were subdivided creating Hennessy Avenue and three building allotments facing Tennyson Street (BP). Alice Posner purchased two lots in 1933 (LV) and in the following year with her husband, Phineas, commissioned architect Leslie J.W. Reed to design this block of flats, which they named 'Yvonfuray' (SM).

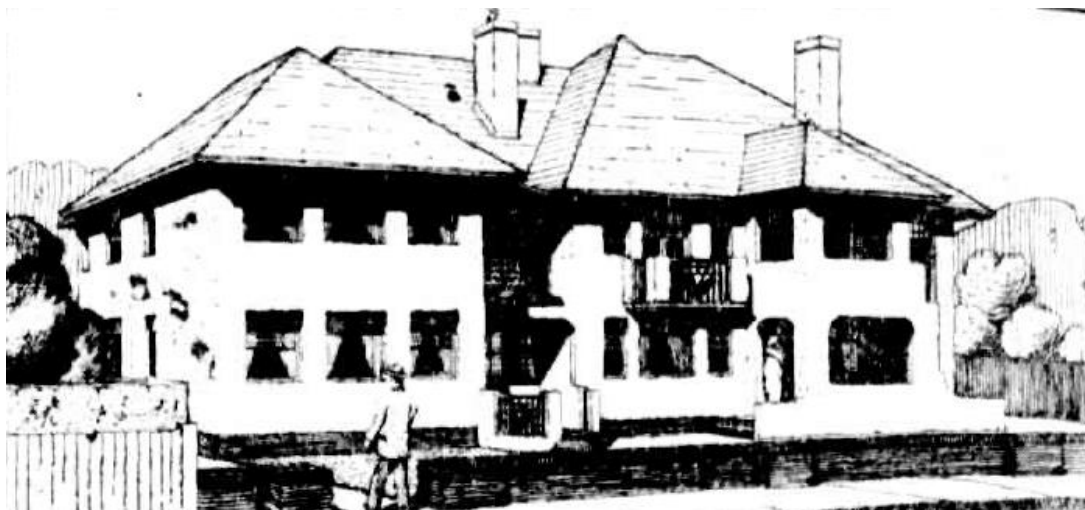
This building, originally comprising one large three-bedroom flat and attached garage on the ground floor and two smaller flats on the first floor, was constructed by James Twining & Sons of Brunswick in 1934 (BP). The large flat was occupied by the Posners and the two smaller flats were rented out. A newspaper article described it as 'An interesting departure from the stereotyped block of residential flats' and noted the attention paid to sound proofing:

*The flats are entirely separated from the dwelling with private entrances on each side of the building and a reinforced slab of concrete between the two floors. Further sound proofing precautions have been taken by the introduction of cork insulation under the floors (The Herald, 'House and flats resemble large home', 5 September 1934, p.18).*

The article went on to note how the kitchens and bathrooms were 'elaborately fitted', with features including 'silent flushing systems' for the lavatories, and artistic dado and ceramic floor tiles 'complete the symphony of harmony and colour'. Externally, the building was finished in cream textured render and wrought iron was 'carefully introduced given a crispness to the elevation, which with the generous porches and balconies, give an air of homeliness so often lacking in the blocks of flats usually erected' (ibid). At the rear was a tennis court.

Flat developments incorporating a large flat for the owner became popular during the 1930s. Other known examples include the adjoining Granada Flats at 34 Tennyson Street, designed by Archibald Ikin and constructed in 1931, which originally comprised a two-storey residence for the owner, H.G. Granat, with a single storey flat attached at the rear. Ikin also designed the Mt Tabor flats, constructed in 1936 at 23 Dickens Street, which contained one large flat of seven rooms for the owner, while the other flats ranged in size from four to five rooms. Another example is Theorose, built in 1940 for Theodore and Rose Duneav at 6A Southey Street, Elwood.

In 1999-2000, two storey additions containing four flats were built at the rear on the site of the tennis court. The original garage was demolished to enable the construction of a driveway leading to the new flats and a rear car parking area. Alterations were made to the interior and the rear elevations of the original flats at the same time (BP).



Artist impression of the flats. Note the low front fence (*The Herald*, 'House and flats resemble large home', 5 September 1934, p.18)

## Leslie J.W. Reed

Leslie J.W. Reed (1893-1964) commenced practice around 1914 and became registered as an architect in 1923. Like many of his contemporaries, Reed designed in a range of popular historical revival styles of the inter-war period including Spanish Mission, Mediterranean, Georgian and Tudor/Old English before finally embracing Modernism by the post-war period. Most of his work was residential comprising houses and flats, as well as some small industrial projects. Reed continued to practise into the early 1960s until shortly before his death in 1964 at the age of 71 years (Built Heritage PL).

Leslie J.W. Reed's career in Port Phillip is represented by several houses and flats, and at least one commercial development built over three decades. In 1925 he designed a house in Westbury Street, but it has been demolished. His earliest extant work is the Spanish Mission style house at 11A Charnwood Road, St Kilda (Citation 873) built in 1928, and his last known and his last known project in Port Phillip was a pair of apartment blocks at 31-33 Pine Avenue, Elwood (Citation 2339), built in 1959-60.

Other flats by Reed in Port Phillip include:

- Beaufort, constructed 1929, at 13-15 Ormond Esplanade, Elwood (Citation 749). This is notable for the central driveway entry through an undercroft between the two blocks.
- Flats and maisonettes (1929-35) 19-21 Ormond Esplanade, Elwood (Citation 750). This complex was built in stages, with the final stage comprising the maisonette within the front southeast corner completed in 1935. Shows the influence of the Spanish Mission style.
- Astolat (1934) 301 Carlisle Street, Balaclava (Citation 317). Old English style.
- Olgmend Court (1940) 147-49 Alma Road, St Kilda East (Citation 402). Georgian Revival with some Moderne influences.

Reed also designed Acland Court, a mixed-use development in the Spanish Mission style comprising shops with flats above built in 1935 at 91-93 Acland Street, St Kilda (Citation 114).

## References

Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'Leslie J.W. Reed', *Dictionary of Unsung Architects*, [www.builtheritage.com.au](http://www.builtheritage.com.au) (viewed 29 March 2021)

Land Victoria (LV) Certificate of title Vol. 5872 Fol. 363

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1373, dated 1897

O'Hanlon, Seamus, 'Home together, Home apart: Boarding house, hostel and flat life in Melbourne c.1900-1940', PhD Thesis, History Department, Monash University

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) **Version 1, July 2020**

St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no. 8505, 6 March 1934; B1494, 1999

Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1935-1940

Sawyer, Terry, (1982) 'Residential flats in Melbourne: the development of a building type to 1950', Honours thesis, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne

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## Description

A large, two-storey, complex of Mediterranean-style, rendered brick flats, with a series of interconnecting hip roofs clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. The flats are set back from Tennyson Street behind a mature privet hedge and the original stepped rendered brick front fence, which has a pedestrian gate at one end, and a driveway opening at the other. Another early planting within the garden is the mature Bhutan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*) adjacent to the north side fence. Glimpses of the mansion, Rotherfield, are visible along the drive when the site is viewed from Tennyson Street.

The Tennyson Street elevation is expressed as two sections. The section at right is broader and is beneath a large hip roof with a smaller projecting hip with balconies below. This broader section of the façade has a greater level of detailing than the section at left. This detailing includes a narrow window, with shaped corbels at its head, that encloses the stairwell. A small balcony, to the left of the projecting bay, has a pair of timber doors with glazed panels, and a wrought iron railing with a geometric pattern set between rendered brick piers.

The bay at left on the Tennyson Street elevation is narrower and has a smaller hip roof. This portion of the Tennyson Street elevation is plainer in its detailing. It does, however, share some detailing with the remainder of the façade, including the geometric pattern in the upper sashes of windows, and similar materiality including terracotta roof tiles and rendered brick walls. At the rear of the block of flats is a large two-storey wing, with a hip roof clad in terracotta tiles and walls of rendered brick.

The building is in good condition and has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

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## Comparative analysis

The Mediterranean style is related to the Interwar Spanish Mission style, but is intentionally designed with subtler features, in a simpler form with more elegant detailing. Derived from the coastal architecture of Spain and Italy it was well-suited to St Kilda and Elwood's seaside location and was a popular style for flat developments. Aesthetically, the massing and restrained character of the style underlines a relationship to the Georgian Revival, but the basic difference is the way in which the buildings are designed to respond to sunlight. Balconies are common, deep porches shade entrance doors and the eaves lines are more prominent, and the classical detailing tends to be playful, and is less formal and restrained than the massing and detailing of Georgian architecture.

Yvonfuray is notable as a large complex of rendered brick, inter-war, flats finely executed in the Mediterranean-style. The massing of the flats is typical of the style with cuboid forms surmounted by hip roofs with deep eaves, the roofs clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. Detailing on the flats synonymous with the Mediterranean-style includes (on the broader section at right) wall openings with corbels at their heads, and a small balcony on the first floor with a wrought iron railing with a geometric pattern set between piers, accessed from a pair of multi-paned glazed doors. Contributing to the aesthetic significance of the flats is its landscaped setting, with this including the privet hedge set behind a low rendered brick fence, and the Bhutan cypress.

Yvonfuray also demonstrates advances in the design of flats in the inter-war period, in particular, minimising noise between each unit and improving privacy. This was achieved using concrete floors and cork insulation



under floor coverings, and 'silent flushing systems' for lavatories. A conscientious approach was made to giving the flats a 'homeliness' about them, which included generous porches and balconies and privacy was improved by providing separate entrances.

Yvonfuray is comparable with other Mediterranean style flats in Port Phillip including Southey Court, 41 Milton Street, Elwood (1925, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 805), Ormond Court, 1 Glen Huntly Road, Elwood (1926, B.S.W. Gilbertson architect, Citation 411), Hawsleigh Court, 2B Hawsleigh Avenue, Balaclava (1928, Hugh Philp architect, Citation 2010), Masefield Court, 115 Brighton Road, Elwood (1934, Archibald Ikin architect, Citation 440), and Mt Tabor Flats, 23 Dickens Street, Elwood (1936, Archibald Ikin architect, Citation 2081).

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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

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with paint controls. Consider adding tree controls to apply to the Bhutan cypress only.

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## Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

## Other studies

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

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

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## Other images

