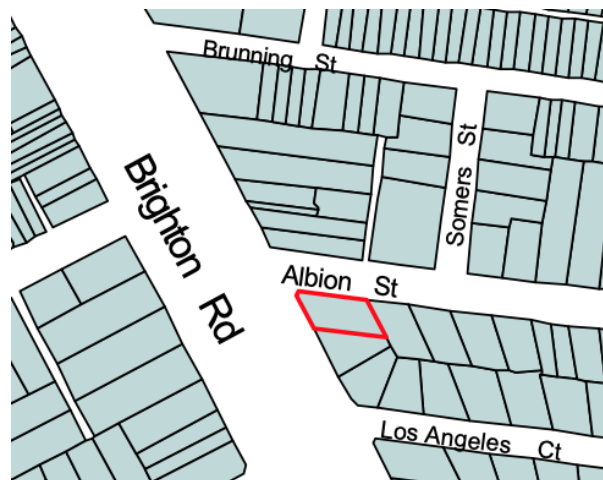


City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: Mid-Mar
Other names: Duplex

Citation No:
303



Address: 48-48A Brighton Road,
Balaclava

Heritage Precinct: Brunnings Estate
& Environs

Category: Residential: Duplex

Heritage Overlay: **HO7**

Style: Interwar: Moderne

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1937

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Leslie J.W. Reed

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

The brick duplex, Mid-Mar, designed by architect Leslie J.W. Reed and constructed in 1937 for W. Stott, at 48-48A Brighton Road, Balaclava is significant. Contributory features include the houses, low brick fences to the street boundaries, brick pathways and garages.

Non-original alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

Mid-Mar at 48-48A Brighton Road, Balaclava is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Mid-Mar is of aesthetic significance as a fine and intact example of an inter-war duplex designed in a Moderne-style. It is well composed and detailed, with much of this detailing in tapestry brickwork using brick of varying sizes, colours/tones and textures. This tapestry brickwork is also found on other elements on this site including its two single car garages, and the street boundary fence, and the balustrades of the porches. The curved walls and window forms (using curved glazed panels) on the house adjacent to the corner of Brighton Road and Albion Street, respond well to the corner setting of the house, particularly when the site is viewed from the north. The stepped massing of the Brighton Road elevation also responds well to the diagonal street boundary of this part of the site. The deep eaves and hoods providing an effect of horizontal floating planes on the composition. Other decorative elements of note include smaller etched glass box windows, and curved walls at corners including adjacent to entrance porches. The shallow garden,

and the well-detailed tapestry brick boundary fence, enhance the house and its setting, and its contribution to its environs which is made up of other inter-war housing. (Criterion E)

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 (5.3.3 Suburban bungalows)

History

Contextual history

Private development in the City of Port Phillip began from the time of the first sales of Crown land in the 1840s and 1850s. The gradual development of infrastructure, including roads, public transport networks and utilities, paved the way for increasing development of private land. Private subdivision within the broad framework set out by Hoddle's survey saw neighbourhoods in the City of Port Phillip grow into populated, thriving communities.

Significant population growth after World War I created a demand for housing, leading to the subdivision (or re-subdivision) of the remaining pockets of vacant or underdeveloped land in the City of Port Phillip. This included vacant land previously thought to be unsuitable for housing, such as in Fishermans Bend, as well as the re-development of the remaining mansion estates. Apart from the mansion estate subdivisions, there were two major interwar subdivisions at either end of the City of Port Phillip: The 'Garden City' estates in Port Melbourne and the Brunnings Estate subdivision in Ripponlea.

The Brunnings Estate was established on the site of George Brunning's nursery in St Kilda (Balaclava), which had been in that location since 1884. Subdivision and sales commenced in 1920, but most of the estate was surveyed and subdivided into 53 blocks in 1927. Los Angeles Court has been identified as the first cul-de-sac in Melbourne and other notable features included concrete roads, street lamps and consistent low brick fences to all properties. At least 17 stylish, detached houses were built on Los Angeles Court and Brighton Road by the late 1930s in a range of popular styles including Old English, Spanish Mission and Moderne and a high proportion of these were architect-designed. As a result, the Brunnings Estate contains perhaps the most comprehensive and intact collection of interwar housing styles in Port Phillip.

Mid-Mar

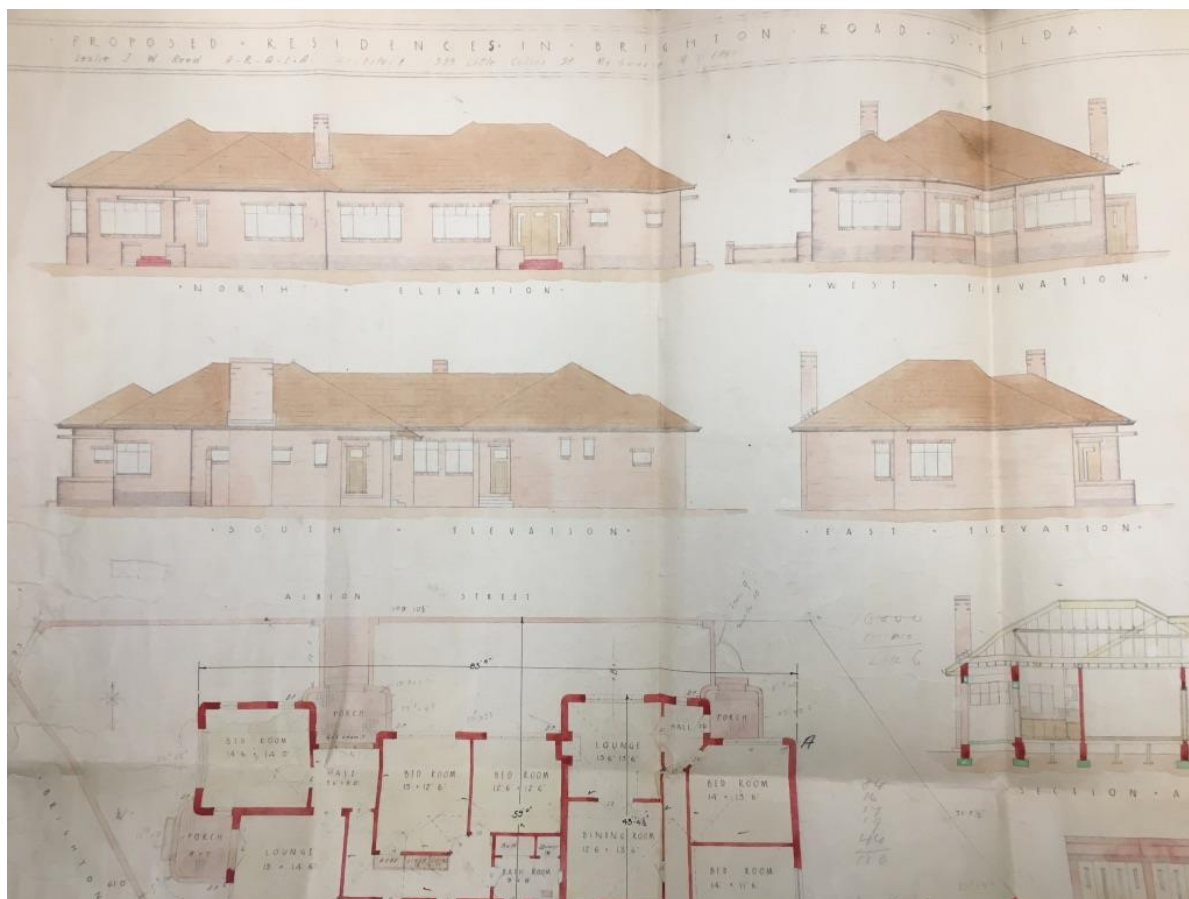
This property at the south corner of Albion Street and Brighton Road was Lot 1 in the Brunnings Estate subdivision. The first two houses in the estate were constructed in 1927, but further development was delayed by the onset of the Great Depression and many lots were not developed until the 1930s.

Mid-Mar, a duplex containing two three-bedroom residences, each with a garage, was constructed in 1937 by L. Glover, builder, for William Stott. Leslie J.W. Reed was the architect. The original building plans show the low brick fences to the street frontages, which include return sections leading to the front porches of the residences, as well as twin garages in the southeast corner (for one, the word 'garage' has been crossed out and replaced with 'fernery'). The architect's specifications stipulated:

The whole of the brickwork to the Albion St and Brighton Rd elevations is to be in Crasy (sic) brickwork, using Evans' Bros Bricks, these are to vary in size, colour and texture, all other exposed work is to be clinker (BP).

Leslie J.W. Reed

Leslie J.W. Reed (1893-1964) commenced practice in about 1914 and became registered as an architect in 1923. Like many of his contemporaries, Reed designed in a range of fashionable historical revival styles including Spanish Mission, Mediterranean, Georgian and Tudor/Old English before finally embracing Modernism by the postwar period. Most of his work was residential comprising houses and flats, as well as some small industrial and commercial 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).



Extract of original building plans (City of Port Phillip)

Leslie J.W. Reed's career in Port Phillip is represented by several houses and flats, and at least one commercial development spanning 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, which was constructed in 1928 and his last known work was the Moderne style house at 6A Dickens Street, completed in 1954.

References

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

Heritage Alliance, *City of Bayside Inter-War and Post-War Heritage Study, Volume 2*, 2010

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. 9769, 18 August 1937

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

Description

Mid-Mar is a fine and intact example of a Moderne inter-war duplex, well composed and detailed, with much of this detailing in tapestry brickwork using brick of varying size, colour/tones and textures. This tapestry brickwork is also found on the chimneys of the house, the garages and the front fence and the balustrades of porches.

This duplex has steep interconnecting hip roofs, clad in glazed terracotta tiles. Its steel frame windows also demonstrate influences and the emergence of the Modern Movement locally. The curved walls and window forms (using curved glazed panels) on the house adjacent to the corner of Brighton Road and Albion Street, provides a good response to this corner setting, particularly when the site is approached from the north. The deep eaves and hoods providing an effect of horizontal floating planes on the composition. The stepped massing of the Brighton Road elevation responds well to the diagonal of this street boundary. Other decorative elements include smaller etched glass box windows, and curved corners on walls including adjacent to entrance porches.

The shallow garden, and the tapestry brick boundary fence, enhance the house and its setting, and its contribution to its environs made up of other inter-war housing. The low brick boundary fence has a base of manganese bricks in a stretcher bond, above this extends a broad panel of tapestry brickwork of bricks of various shapes, and of smooth and textured finishes. The fence is crowned with angled soldier course of brickwork, also in different sizes and textures, and at top a curved capping of bricks. The fence has curved projections at its corners. The balustrading of the entrance porches has detailing that is similar to the brickwork of the street boundary fence (apart from the curved projections at corners). The path of the front unit is surfaced in brick.

A pair of single-car garages, in a stepped arrangement, are situated at the southeast corner of the site. They are well-detailed in brick, albeit restrained compared to the brickwork on the houses. The walls of the garages are faced in brick, soldier courses of Roman-style brick extend above the doors of the garages (original doors replaced with rollershutters). Courses of brick of differing bonds form a cornice on the parapet of the garages.

Comparative analysis

Following the economic depression of the 1890s, there was concern that inner Melbourne was becoming overcrowded. Terrace houses fell out of favour, as they were perceived as being cold and dark with limited garden space. Instead, detached bungalows became the most popular form of housing from the Federation/Edwardian period onward.

This concept of a 'garden suburb' (as distinct from the consciously-planned model Garden City estates that came later – see below), comprising a reasonably spacious single-family dwelling in a secluded garden setting, became the ideal expression of urban living in the early twentieth century. Facilitated by improvements to public transport networks, particularly the electrification of the tram and railway networks, this housing defines the suburbs that developed during this era, including much of Middle Park, St Kilda East, Elwood and Ripponlea.

Houses constructed in the 1930s often feature the decorative use of Roman or tapestry bricks (for example, as string courses, corbels, or quoining) to add visual interest to facades. Conventional bricks could also be used in a decorative way, by use of different bonds, or when laid in patterns (for example, to imitate traditional brick 'nogging' in Old English style houses). Mid-Mar is distinguished by the combined use of special and conventional decorative brickwork in a technique that has been described as 'crazy tapestry brickwork', which was popular during the 1930s. Tapestry brick was often used in feature panels or as trim, but in this case it covers all visible external wall surfaces and the front fences on Brighton Road and Albion

Street as well. It is one of several houses or flats designed by Leslie J.W. Reed that use this technique and at least one other, the house designed in 1935 for Arthur Rose at 326 Orrong Road, Caulfield North, has been demolished. The Elvada flats at 358 Glenferrie Road, Malvern (1933) also show this technique.

While several buildings in Port Phillip feature the use of patterned brickwork for decorative effect (the flats designed by James H. Wardrop such as Zaneth Manor being among the best examples) there are no other examples of 'crazy tapestry brickwork' to the degree demonstrated by Mid-Mar.

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.

Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay. Specific controls (external painting, internal alterations etc.) are not required.

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 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images