

# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** Midlothian  
**Other names:** House

**Citation No:**  
**307**



**Address:** 64 Brighton Road, Ripponlea

**Heritage Precinct:** Brunnings Estate & Environs

**Category:** Residential: House

**Heritage Overlay:** **HO7**

**Style:** Interwar: Spanish Mission

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1929

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** Dickson & Yorston

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

## Significance

### *What is significant?*

Midlothian, constructed by Dickson & Yorston in 1929 for Agnes Higgins, at 64 Brighton Road, Ripponlea is significant. It is a rendered brick, Spanish Mission-style house that is asymmetrically composed with a large L-shaped gable roof. The façade has a stepped composition. At left, is a projecting bay with a porch, which is set forward of a central bay with a smaller gable (projecting from the larger gable roof of the house), and at right, set back to the side of the house and below a flat roof, is a porch and porte-cochere. The front fence and gates also contribute to the significance of the place.

Non-original alterations and additions to the house are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

Midlothian at 64 Brighton Road, Ripponlea is of local representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### *Why is it significant?*

Midlothian is of representative value to the City of Port Phillip, as an example of the housing built by G.C. Dixon and Yorston, one of Melbourne's most prominent and successful building companies during the interwar period that specialised in residential buildings. Their housing tended to be targeted at the higher end of residential market, as they were relatively costly in comparison with housing of other builder-developers. (Criterion D)

Midlothian is of aesthetic significance as a fine and relatively intact example of a Spanish Mission-style house within the City of Port Phillip. It is a large and well-detailed example of the style, with a bold roof expression comprising gables, hip and flat roof profiles on a stepped façade composition and characteristic materiality and detailing such as Cordoba tiles, dove-cote chimneys, and textured rendered walls relieved in places with clinker brick, that form an eclectic composition. Of note is the street-boundary fence and other detailing, its geometric shapes allude to the patterns and art of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures. (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 (5.3.3 Suburban bungalows, 5.3.4 Model housing estates)

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## 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.

### Midlothian

Land to the north and south of Glen Eira Road between Brighton Road and the Sandringham railway was subdivided and offered for sale during the land boom of the late nineteenth century and by 1904 several villas had been constructed in Glen Eira Road and in Maryville Street, which formed the southern boundary of the vast Brunning's Nursery (MMBW). However, the economic depression of the 1890s halted development and it was not until the Ripponlea railway station was opened in 1913 that building recommenced. A shopping centre was rapidly established along Glen Eira Road between the railway and Hotham Street and most of the shops were constructed from 1913 to 1918. This served the growing

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residential areas developed on the vacant land to the north and new estates including the Quat Quatta and Erindale subdivisions to the south of Glen Eira Road.

The electrification of the railway in 1919 and the extension and electrification of the tramway along Brighton Road in 1925 stimulated development and almost all the remaining vacant land to the north and south of Glen Eira Road east of Brighton Road was developed during the interwar period. This included the subdivision of the vast Brunnings Nursery as a housing estate, which included creation of the new streets of Los Angeles Court and Monkstadt Avenue.

Land along the east side of Brighton Road between Maryville Street and Glen Eira Road remained vacant until the early twentieth century. While this land did not form part of the Brunnings Estate subdivision it was acquired by George and Herbert Brunning in 1920. They subdivided the land in 1921, and development soon commenced (LV). Dickson & Yorston constructed this house in 1929 for Agnes Higgins who was still living here in 1940 (BP, SM). The original building plans do not show the name of an architect, so it is possible they were prepared in-house by the company. Dickson and Yorston also designed and constructed the house at no.66 (see citation 437).

## Dickson & Yorston

G.C. Dixon and Yorston was one of Melbourne's most prominent and successful building companies during the interwar period and specialised in residential buildings. As well as constructing single residences and blocks of flats the firm was responsible for developing several distinctive bungalow court subdivisions in the late 1920s and 1930s in Melbourne's eastern and southeastern suburbs, often created on former mansion estates. The first of these was Rothesay Avenue in Brighton, constructed in 1925-26 on the site of The Elms mansion estate. This was followed by Lempriere Avenue, St Kilda East (1926-27 on the site of the Rozelle mansion), Fosbery Avenue, Caulfield (1930) and Redcourt Avenue, Armadale (1933, Redcourt mansion). Dickson and Yorston were strongly influenced by the Garden City Movement in the planning of their estates and provided generous front gardens and low front fences. At Lempriere Avenue, services were placed underground and replaced by decorative lamp standards, and the firm also landscaped the entrance from the street to the adjacent Greenmeadows Gardens at their own cost. These subdivisions were targeted at the higher end of residential market making Dickson and Yorston's houses relatively costly in comparison with those of other builder-developers such as A.V. Jennings. Most if not all their houses and flats were architect designed, many of them by Gordon J. and Bruce Sutherland.

## References

- Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P., *A pictorial guide to identifying Australian architecture. Styles and terms from 1788 to the present*, 1989
- Cuffley, Peter, *Australian houses of the twenties and thirties*, (2nd edition) 2007
- Land Victoria (LV) Certificate of title Vol. 4425 Fol. 920
- Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan no.1451, dated 1904
- Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) **Version 1, July 2020**
- St Kilda Council building permit (BP) no.7488, 7 June 1929
- Sands & McDougall Directories (SM) 1930, 1935, 1940

## Description

Midlothian is asymmetrically composed with a large L-shaped gable roof. The façade has a stepped composition. At left, is a projecting bay with a porch, which is set forward of a central bay with a smaller gable (projecting from the larger gable roof of the house), and at right, set back to the side of the house and below a flat roof, is a porch and porte-cochere. Midlothian has motifs and materiality commonly associated with the Spanish Mission-style, such as Cordoba tiles, dovecote chimneys, and textured rendered walls that are relieved in places with clinker brick. As a sum they form an eclectic composition in this style.

The front fence with its panels of geometric shapes, and the decorative vent in the detail, allude not so much to the Spanish Mission-style, but the art of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures. It retains mild steel driveway gates with a diamond pattern and scalloped top. Added to the blend of influences is the house's name, Midlothian, on its name plate fixed to its *porte cochere*. This name, generally associated with Caledonian origins, may not be original. The lush front garden of the house gives the house a recessive quality when the site is viewed from Brighton Road.

The house and fence are in good condition and have a high degree of external intactness.

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## 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.

Midlothian is one of several houses in the diverse styles popular during the inter-war period that define the built form of the east side of Brighton Road, between Albion Street and Glen Eira Road. This house is designed in a Spanish Mission style, this style not directly influenced by buildings of the Iberian Peninsula, rather the popular Spanish Colonial Revival-style of California.

Spanish Mission is a romantic and evocative style. It emerged in the late nineteenth century in the United States and was popularized in the 1920s, particularly in California and Florida. In Australia, awareness of the style owed much to the influence of Hollywood and the first examples appeared by the mid-1920s. It is characterized by use of light tones and colours, exploitation of sunlight and shadow and concentrations of elaborate ornament contrasted with plain surfaces. Buildings are generally asymmetrical with stuccoed wall surfaces with simulated handcrafted texture. Roofs are medium pitched and often feature half-round tiles. Distinctive features include arcaded loggias and balconies, often supported by 'barley twist' columns, and use of decorative wrought-iron work, ceramic tiles or plaster ornament, often invoking classical features. Fences were often high and solid. (Apperly 1989:179, Cuffley 2007:94-97).

Midlothian is a fine and relatively intact example of a Spanish Mission style house within the City of Port Phillip. It is a large and well-detailed example of the style, with a bold roof expression comprising gables, hip and flat roof profiles on a stepped façade composition, and characteristic materiality and detailing such as Cordoba tiles, dovetailed chimneys, and textured rendered walls relieved in places with clinker brick, that form an eclectic composition. Of note is the street-boundary fence and other detailing, its geometric shapes allude to the patterns and art of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures.

It compares favourably with other Spanish Mission style houses included in the HO in Port Phillip:

- House, 11A Charnwood Road, St Kilda (1927) designed by Leslie J.W. Reed (Citation 956)
- Granada, 28 Eildon Road, St Kilda (1927) designed by F.D. Meadows (Citation 899)
- House, 36 Tennyson Street, Elwood (1929) designed by Gordon J. Sutherland (Citation 373)
- House, 4 Los Angeles Court, Ripponlea (1930) designed by Schreiber & Jorgensen (Citation 341)
- House, 20 Monkstadt Avenue, Ripponlea (1931) designed by Marcus Barlow (Citation 356)
- House, 14 Maryville Street, Ripponlea (1933) designed by Alder & Lacey (Citation 348)

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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.

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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