



Davis Residence

Prepared by: GML Heritage

Address: 32 Ursa Street BALWYN NORTH

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| Name: Davis Residence | Survey Date: December 2021 |
| Place Type: Residential | Architect: Harcourt Long (original house and additions) |
| Grading: Individually Significant | Builder: K B Davis (owner/builder) |
| Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries | Construction Date: 1950-52 1953; 1956 (additions) |



Figure 1 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 2 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North (Source: GML 2021)



Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic themes taken from the *Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (2012):

6.3.3 Creating Middle class suburbs in the early twentieth century

6.3.4 Suburban infill after Second World War

9.3.2 Designing fine buildings

Balwyn North is a residential suburb situated 10 kilometres east of central Melbourne. To its south is Balwyn, which is separated from Balwyn North by Belmore Road. It is bounded on the north by Koonung Creek and the Eastern Freeway. The suburb was formerly part of the City of Camberwell and from 1994 has been part of the City of Boroondara.

Large parts of Balwyn North had remained notably underdeveloped until 1938, when the extension of the electric tram route to Doncaster Road spurred a significant residential boom. This, however, was soon cut short by the onset of the Second World War, and it would not resume until the later 1940s. Even then, private homebuilding was still hampered by restrictions on labour and materials that had been imposed during the War. As a result, the initial burst of post-war homebuilding in Balwyn North was relatively modest compared to the massive influx that took place from the early 1950s, when these wartime restrictions were finally relaxed.

1940s and postwar development

There had been a scattering of new housing development in the area north of Belmore Road from the late 1930s, but this area was developed significantly from the early 1940s as the new suburb of North Balwyn. Occupied with orchards and small farms, this was the one of the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land relatively close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples building new homes in the 1940s and 1950s (a proportion of which included returned servicemen). The suburb developed as quintessentially middle class, with a high proportion of brick homes and a notable absence of industrial activity. The ridge that ran along Doncaster Road was an advantage to house blocks in the adjoining streets, providing sought-after views to the distant ranges and encouraging the building of often grandiose double-storey homes. Public transport was provided with the extension from the electric tram from East Kew to North Balwyn in 1938, along High Street and Doncaster Road. A large shopping centre, known as North Balwyn Village, developed along Doncaster Road.

In the 1950s, the potential for large-scale residential development in North Balwyn was recognised by a private company, A.V. Jennings Pty Ltd, which proposed the Trentwood Estate on a large tract of land off Doncaster Road (Built Heritage 2015:12). From 1947, Balwyn and Balwyn North were acknowledged not only as epicentres for the Small Homes Service but also for Modernist architect-designed homes in general. A number of notable architects, including Robin Boyd, designed Modernist homes in Balwyn in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the streets east of Balwyn Road, including the elevated area around Beckett Park.

This new residential expansion in Balwyn North, which included the Greythorn area in the 1950s, in turn brought commercial development. Several local retail strips appeared in the north of the study area, including in Bulleen Road at Dorado Avenue, in Balwyn Road between Lucifer and Echo streets, and, most notably, the prominent strip on Doncaster Road, just down from the Trentwood Estate. In



1960, G.J. Coles opened a large store on the corner of Doncaster Road and Burke Road, which was Melbourne's first American-style self-service drive-in supermarket complex. New schools and churches also appeared during this period of development. Balwyn High School, located in Balwyn North, opened in 1954, followed by Greythorn High School in 1959. Several new churches were constructed, extended or rebuilt to provide for burgeoning congregations (Built Heritage 2015:12). This included new Catholic churches at Deepdene, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

Since the 1990s, a significant influx of new immigrants into the area has seen the extensive replacement of interwar and 1940s homes with new residential development. The suburb of Balwyn North today is favoured by many new home-owners for access to Balwyn High School—a co-educational government secondary school with nearly 2000 students.

Dating from 1950-52, this house is associated with the emergence of postwar homebuilding in Balwyn North – that is, the period from the late 1940s to the early 1950s.

History

The land at 9 Ursa Street, Balwyn North, originally formed part of Elgar's Crown Special Survey purchased and surveyed by Henry Elgar in 1841.

Elgar did not reside on the land as he was based in the West Indies, employing an agent to manage his investments in Australia. The survey was subdivided into small farms and grazing runs and leased out for several years. After financial difficulties forced Elgar to sell his land, the majority was purchased by a shipowner named Brooks, while a third of the survey remained in the possession of Mrs Dyce, the widow of one of Elgar's business partners.

John Laidlaw Todd purchased 151 acres of Elgars Special Survey in 1904 (CT V3022 F336). Todd held the land until 1915 when it was sold to Sarah Robinson who subdivided the southernmost portion of the land to create extensions to Cascade Street, Riverside Avenue, Inverness Way and The Boulevard (CT V3868 F411).

In 1923 Robinson subdivided a further section of her land creating Ursa Street with the subject site becoming Lot 68. Unsold land on the subdivision, including the subject site, was sold to the Land Investment Company limited in 1928 (CT V4868 F403; CT V5405 F984).

Philip John Fitzgerald Winch purchased Lot 68 in June 1932. Winch owned the vacant lot until 1949 when it was purchased by Peter and Loyes Tippet. The Tippet's held on to the land for less than a year with lot 68 being sold to Keth and Lynette Davis in September 1950 (CT V5799 F776).

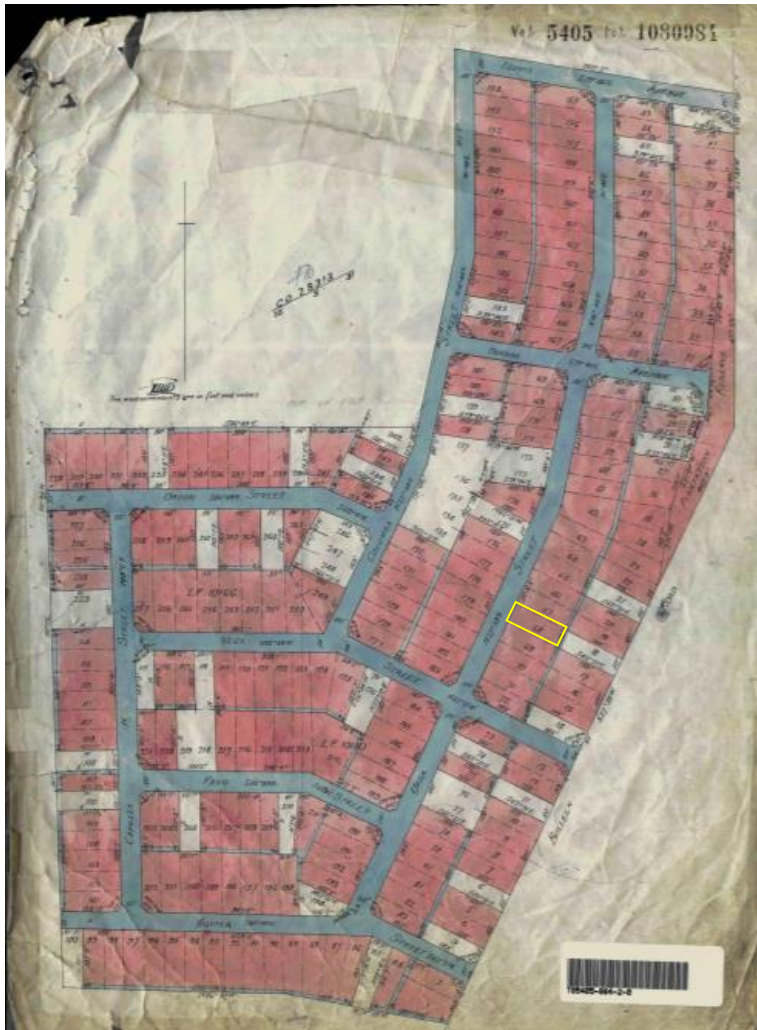


Figure 3 Plan of subdivision in 1923 creating Ursa Street. The subject site is lot 68 of this subdivision and is outlined in yellow. (Source: CT V5405 F984)

To design their new house, the Davises turned to architect Harcourt Hilton Long. At the time that he was engaged to design the house, Long was still a student, two years from graduation. His working drawings, dated 6 August 1950, proposed a modest two-bedroomed single-storey brick house on a J-shaped courtyard plan. Reflecting many of the latest ideas in modern residential architecture, the house was zoned with the bedrooms and living areas isolated at opposite ends, connected by a wide circulation space with north-facing windows (designated as 'sun room') that also provided access to a central core of service areas: bathroom, kitchen, laundry and a dedicated dark room for Davis' photography.

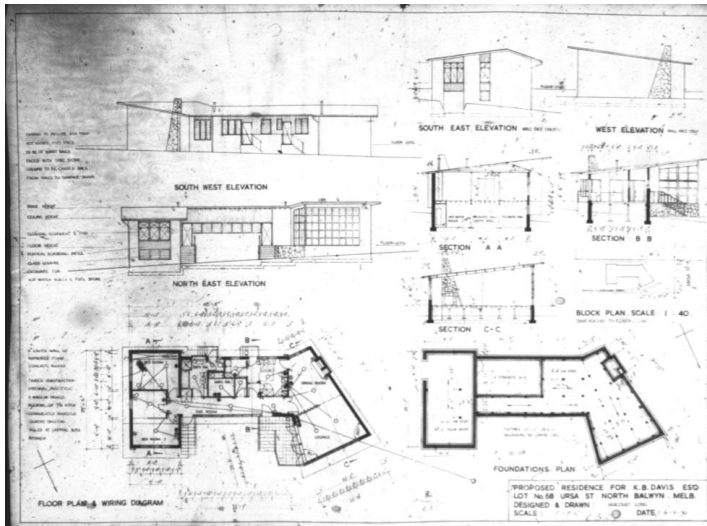


Figure 4 Working drawing sheet showing elevations, floor plan (electrical layout) and foundation plan prepared by Harcourt Long dated 6.8.1950 (Source: BP 57368)

A building permit was issued for the house on 9 January 1951 and construction, which was evidently undertaken by Davis himself, commenced in March 1951 and was completed the following year (BP 6327). While little is known of Harcourt Long's architectural career in Melbourne in the 1950s, he was retained by the Davises to undertake two more phases of additions to their house: a basement storeroom and detached garage (1953, BP 6327, 13110) and a third bedroom at the rear and a second attached garage along the street frontage (1956, BP 18783, 17887).

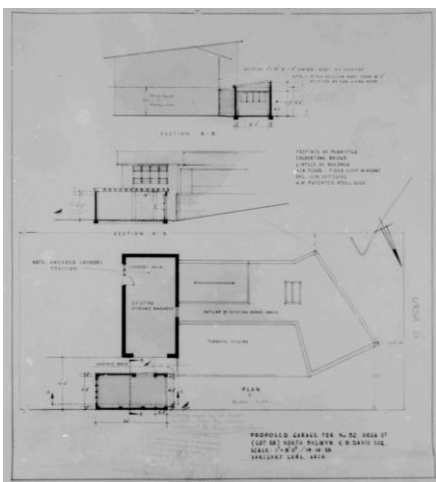


Figure 5 Working drawing dated 1953 for proposed alterations to 32 Ursa Street North Balwyn including a free-standing garage and basement. (Source: BP 6327, 13110)

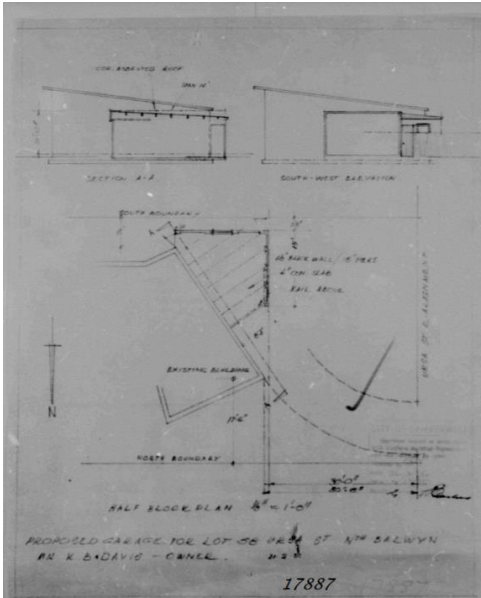


Figure 6 Drawing showing proposed garage at 32 Ursa Street North Balwyn. (Source: BP 17887)

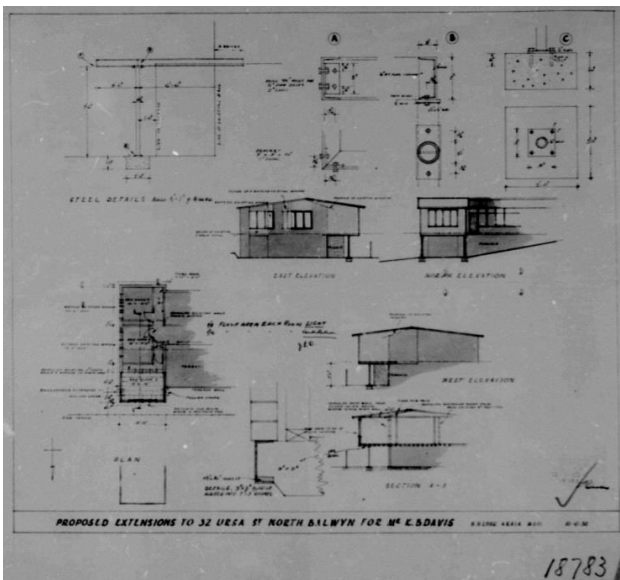


Figure 7 Proposed extension to 32 Ursa street North Balwyn for Mr KB Davis prepared by HH Long ARIA dated 19 June 56. (Source: BP 18783)

Keith and Lyn Davis remained living at the property until 1964. The property changed hands again in 1970 and in 1980. Council building cards record no alterations or additions to the property since 1956.



Harcourt Long Architect

The following biography of the designer of 22 Riverview Road has been compiled by Simon Reeves:

The son of an engineer, Long was born in Fremantle in 1922. A returned serviceman, he had enlisted in 1942 and served as a gunner with the 55th Australian Composite Ack-Ack Regiment. Discharged in June 1946, Long commenced his architectural studies at the University of Melbourne and, the following year, was one of a many students from the facilities of medicine, engineering, architecture and dental science to be transferred to a temporary campus established at Mildura to accommodate the flood of post-war enrolments. Long completed his degree in 1952 and graduated the following year. Having selected town planning as the subject for his undergraduate thesis, Long went on to obtain a master's degree in that field from the same university (Long 1953). By 1958, he had returned to his native Western Australia and was working as an architect and town planner in Perth, where he prepared a foreshore redevelopment scheme incorporating a 3,500-seat amphitheatre (Mullumby 2018:64). In 1963, Long was appointed by the Commonwealth administration as the first resident planning officer to the Northern Territory (Hansard 2012). He moved to Darwin, where he prepared a Regional Land Use Concept Plan and an ambitious town planning scheme for Greater Darwin to cover the ten-year period from 1965 to 1975. Long subsequently returned to Melbourne, where he took up the position of city planner to the municipality of South Melbourne. (Built Heritage 2013)

Description

Occupying a site that slopes downward from the street frontage, the house at 32 Ursa Street is a single-storey skillion roofed dwelling of pale-coloured clay or concrete brick construction, designed in an austere post-war modernist style. Laid out on a J-shaped north-facing courtyard plan, the house is zoned by function, effectively comprising three distinct and discretely-expressed parts: a prominent wedge-shaped living/dining room fronting the street and a rear wing containing the bedrooms, connected by an elongated link that contains the service areas and a north-facing 'sun room'. A fourth element, in the form of a small, attached garage (added 1956) projects from the west side of the street facade.

The street frontage of the house is dominated by the tall wedge-shaped living/dining room, where the skillion roof is particularly prominent. It has wide eaves to the north side, shading a substantial timber-framed and multi-paned window wall with spandrel clad in vertical timber boards. The brickwork is notched at the external corners, consequent to the intersection of its walls at an angle less than ninety degrees. The side wall of the front wing, facing Ursa Street and incorporating the small, attached garage, is blank and entirely windowless, enlivened only by a decorative pattern of projecting header bricks to the garage wall. The main entrance to the house is located off the central courtyard and not visible from the street, via steps that lead up to a small, paved sun-deck at the intersection of the front wing. The house is set behind a front garden with low shrubs, and specimen Chinese Fan Palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) and cordylines. Garden beds and the front boundary are defined by volcanic rock. A single brick pillar with integrated letterbox stands at the edge of the concrete paved driveway entry. There is no front fence, as was typical of gardens associated with Modernist houses of this time.



Integrity

32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North, is largely intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. The house retains its original built form with prominent skillion roof, 'J' shaped plan, north facing central courtyard, pale brick walls and large window walls of glass. Early additions designed by the same architect include a basement storeroom and detached garage (1953) and a third bedroom at the rear and a second garage along the street frontage (1956). These additions are both very discrete in scale and, being designed by the same architect, are sympathetic in form, materials and style. They have neither diminished nor detracted from the distinctive form of the original 1950-52 house, which still dominates. The garden retains features that are typical of Modernist houses including no front fence and volcanic rock edged garden beds.

Overall, the house is of very high integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century there was rapid suburban growth around the fringes of metropolitan Melbourne. Increased access to the motor car, growing prosperity in the postwar period, and the desire for the suburban lifestyle resulted in the push for new housing and services in the suburbs of Melbourne.

Despite various subdivisions in the late 1800s and in the early twentieth century, the vast majority of the housing stock in Balwyn North was not built until the postwar period. The area north of Belmore Road, where large tracts of land were taken up with orchards and small farms, was one of the last remaining areas of extensive undeveloped land close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples in the 1950s and 1960s with many using architects to design their homes. Many of these architects were influenced by the International style that had emerged in Europe between the wars. They approached house design with optimism and innovation, despite the material shortages and other restrictions that had been imposed during the war years.

Modernism offered an alternative to many of the postwar styles offered at the time, many of which were simply scaled-down versions of the 1940s prototypes. The informality of open floor plans, and the relationship between interior spaces and the landscape setting, fitted comfortably within the Australian context, and this, coupled with a simplicity of structure and minimisation of decoration, worked at a time when demand for housing was high, building materials were in short supply, and money short to spend on housing.

This house can be considered as a representative example of the progressive architect-designed dwellings that began to proliferate in Balwyn North from the early 1950s. Many of the defining characteristics of this house (namely the north facing courtyard plan, the bold skillion roof forms, prominent window walls, sun-decks and the compartmentalising of the plan into separate zones for living and sleeping, linked by a service area) were being explored by a number of architects at that time.

These elements are evident in the contemporaneous residential work of Robin Boyd, as well as those who prepared house plans for the Age/RVIA Small Homes Service (established in 1947) of which Boyd was foundation director. As such, this house can be broadly compared with surviving examples of Boyd's early work in the area, namely the Wood House at 12-14 Tannock Street designed in 1948-49 (HO928) and the Dunstan House at 17 Yandilla Road designed in 1949-50 (assessed as



significant as part of this study). Both these houses similarly incorporate a substantial window wall but were substantially enlarged – to Boyd's design – during the late 1950s and '60s. While these two Boyd houses are undeniably important in their own right, they are perhaps now slightly less evocative of the humbler aspirations of the first generation of post-war homebuilders in Balwyn North, and of the modest houses that they built there. By contrast, the original portion of the Davis House, dating from 1950-52, remains dominant and evocative of the aspirations and limitations at the time of construction, amidst much smaller-scaled additions (also by the same architect).



Figure 8 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North designed by Robin Boyd in 1948-49 with alterations by Boyd in 1959 and 1971 (HO928) (Source: Built Heritage 2020)

12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North is of local architectural and technical significance. Architecturally, the house is an early and notably intact example of the work of the eminent designer and writer Robin Boyd. It remains as one of relatively few surviving examples from this seminal phase of Boyd's career, prior to his celebrated partnership with Roy Grounds and Frederick Romberg. Along with the Gillison House in Kireep Road, Balwyn (1951), and the Dunstan House in Yandilla Road (1950), it is one of three outstanding early and substantially intact houses by Robin Boyd in the area. Considered collectively, these provide rare and valuable evidence of the innovation, boldness and fresh design approaches of a young architect on the cusp of an illustrious career.



Figure 9 East elevation of 17 Yandilla Street, Balwyn designed

17 Yandilla Street, Balwyn is of representative significance as a notable achievement in modern homebuilding at a time when materials and labour were still in short supply due to wartime restrictions. In the face of such limitations, Boyd conceived the design as a three-stage process, which was subsequently realised (to his design and supervision) in 1951 and 1963. The house encapsulated many ideas, such as open-planning, split-levels and window walls, that were extremely innovative at the time.



by Robin Boyd in 1949-50 with additions by Boyd in 1951 and 1963 (assessed as significant in this study). (Source: GML 2021)

While modest (but still Modernist) houses of this type dotted Balwyn/Balwyn North in the early 1950s, little evidence of them remains today. Several equally evocative examples are known to have been demolished or substantially altered in very recent years. Chief amongst these was a single-storey rendered house at 10 Stephen Street, erected in 1951 using a standard design of the *Age*/RVIA Small Homes Service, which was similar to 32 Ursa Street in its use of bold skillion roofed wings and generous glazing. Another modestly-scaled skillion-roofed example, at 8 Carrigal Street, also dating from 1951 and designed by architect R Griffiths, has since been substantially remodelled.

No other example of the architectural work of Harcourt Long has been identified in Balwyn/Balwyn North, the broader City of Boroondara, or elsewhere in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Given that Long chose to pursue a career in town planning rather than architecture (and was absent from Victoria for more than a decade from c.1957 until the 1970s), it seems likely that this house – probably undertaken as a favour to a close friend – represents a rare or even unique example of his work, designed when Long was still an undergraduate student.

The house at 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North can be compared more broadly to a number of contemporaneous houses in Balwyn and Balwyn North that exhibit a similar use of volumetric massing, flat roofs and full-height glazing. Despite the dominance of houses built in the years following World War II, Heritage Overlay coverage of postwar houses in Balwyn North is limited. Comparable examples in Balwyn and Balwyn North include:



Figure 10 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North designed by Robin Boyd in 1949 (HO616) (Source: GML 2022)

'Bunbury House', 300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and social significance. It represents a significantly early and intact example of modernist architecture by prominent Australian architect, theorist, author and critic Robin Boyd. 'Bunbury house' displays clear associations in its design and detailing with the designs of Robin Boyd that were developed as part of the Small Homes Service, an initiative that sought to provide cost effective, architecturally designed homes to a wider audience. 'Bunbury house' incorporates design elements that are recognisable and important in Boyd's design work, including the design of efficient floor plans, floor to ceiling glazing, projecting eaves and suspended sun shading devices constructed from timber slats.



Figure 11 Gillson House 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn designed by Robin Boyd in 1952 (HO177) (Source: Docomomo Journal 65,2019)

'Gillson House', 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn is of local historical and architectural significance. Architecturally its design epitomizes Boyd and other Melbourne Modernists' approach to design, with a minimalist external cuboid expression adorned only by 'structural decoration' as implied by the triangular bracing to windows. Like the nearby 'Stargazer house', (designed by Peter McIntyre architect in 1951-52) at 2 Taurus Street, Balwyn North, it also took the form-follows-function dictum to a visual extreme, in the design of the writer's study.

Postwar houses in the Heritage Overlay in the broader Boroondara context that are comparable to 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North, include:



Figure 12 'Robin Boyd House I', 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell designed by Robin Boyd in 1947 (VHR H0879; HO116) (Source: National Trust of Australia (Victoria))

'Robin Boyd House I', 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell is of local historical and architectural significance. The house is considered by Boyd's contemporaries as the prototype Post-War Modern house which took up new ideas about spatial flow, both inside and outside the building, revealing in the minimalism required by the war's materials conservation program and the challenges posed by the near impossible site. It extended the leading architecture of its time and strongly influenced an emerging group of architects. The house demonstrates innovative design with regard to response to site, informality in planning, flowing spatial arrangements, innovative use of materials and incorporation of built-in features. These are all aspects of domestic design which have now become common.



Figure 13 6 Reeves Court, Kew designed by Ernest Milston in 1955 (HO822) (Source: Trethowan 2017)

'Milston House', 6 Reeves Court, Kew is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic and associative significance. The house is a lightweight, timber framed house designed by architect Ernest Milston. The plan is formed of two rectangles reflective of the zones; the kitchen and living area are aligned with the street and run across the slope, while the bedrooms, bathroom and laundry are at right angles. Each wing has a separate skillion roof sloping to the other wing, creating an asymmetrical butterfly roof. A concrete driveway leads up from street level to a garage and studio, connected with the house by a pergola-covered path. A separate open pergola covers the entry. The building features extensive modular timber framed glazing. Horizontal awnings provide shade to the north, echoed in the open timber framing over the windows to the south that allow light penetration.



Figure 14 18 Yarra Street, Kew designed by McGlashan & Everist in 1961 (Significant within HO530) (Source: Hermes)

'Guss residence', 18 Yarra Street, Kew (Significant within HO530) is a good example of the inventive, spare, and environment-responsive designs of McGlashan & Everist. Built in 1961, the Guss residence consists of three pavilion forms around a central courtyard staggered up the sloping site. Utilising thin steel framing and light materials to reduce the bulk of the pavilions, glazed walls float above the driveway and provide views down the site.



Figure 15 Dickie House, 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn c.1961-64 HO784 City of Boroondara (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2017)

'Dickie House', 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn is of local historical, architectural and aesthetic significance. The house is representative of the post-war design ethos, sense of optimism and architectural modernisation pioneered by Robin Boyd and others. The high-quality house-design features honesty of structure and material, clean lines, deep eaves and an overall sense of innovation in design. The integration of the house with the landscape, with its 'floating' appearance over the banks of the Yarra is characteristic of Modernist integration of architecture with natural context.



Figure 16 Cukierman Residence, 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East designed by Hayden & Associates (attributed to Anthony Hayden) in 1966 (HO857) (Source: Context in association with Trethowan 2018)

'Cukierman Residence' 9 Leura Grove, Hawthorn is of local historical, architectural, aesthetic technical and associative significance to the City of Boroondara. The residence derives its aesthetic appeal from its unusual and striking architectural composition with references to the International Style. Interest is created through the floating curved massed form fronting the street and subtle but evocative detailing of materials. The horizontal articulation of the window sets with their green mosaic tiled spandrel panels is applied with effect. Slender circular columns support the raised form, creating an open undercroft, and the use of textured cream brick is continued in the landscaping elements such as the low walls and planters

32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North exhibits key elements of postwar Modernist houses; most notably in its response to its site, informality in planning, flowing spatial arrangements and innovative use of materials. It compares to the earlier (1947) 'Robin Boyd House I' (VHR H0879; HO116) which is widely recognised as the prototype for postwar modern homes, use of new ideas regarding the spatial flow between inside and out and the innovative use of materials in a time of postwar austerity.

Robin Boyd first introduced the concept of a regional Melbourne style in 1947 calling for an architecture that was simple, light and fresh with an unpretentious elegance. Apperly, Irving and Reynolds (1989) describe the typical characteristics of the style as a house with a flat or low-pitched roof with wide eaves, long unbroken roof lines with exposed rafters or joists, vertical or horizontal boarding and large areas of glass with regularly spaced timber mullions. Examples of Robin Boyd's work in Boroondara that demonstrate these qualities and are comparable to the subject place include:

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300 Balwyn Road, Balwyn North 1949 (HO616), 43 Kireep Road, Balwyn, built in 1952 (HO177) and 12-14 Tannock Street, Balwyn North, built in 1948-49, 1959, 1971 (HO928).

Architecturally and aesthetically 32 Ursa Street is most comparable to 6 Reeves Court designed by Ernest Milston in 1955 (HO822). Both houses are zoned by function, effectively comprising distinct and discretely-expressed living/dining room fronting the street and rear wings containing the bedrooms. Each zone sits under separate skillion roofs. Both houses feature extensive modular timber framed glazing.

32 Ursa Street can also be compared to 18 Yarra Street, Kew designed by McGlashan & Everist in 1961 (Significant within HO530), 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn c.1961-64 (HO784) and 17 Cukierman Residence, 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East designed by Hayden & Associates (attributed to Anthony Hayden) in 1966 (HO857) for its use of a bold roof plane, large walls of glazing that connect the interior with the exterior and simple unadorned planar wall surfaces. However, 18 Yarra Street, Kew, 6 Fairview Street, Hawthorn, and 29 Leura Grove, Hawthorn East, are all of a later build date (1960s), more substantial in size and more elaborate in their detailing. They represent a second period of modernism where residential architecture was no longer restrained by the austerity measures in place immediately after the war allowing for a greater elaboration in design and size of house.

Overall 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North is an exceptionally fine and intact example of an early modernist house. It exhibits key characteristics of the style being distinguished by its bold skillion roof forms, prominent window walls, sun-deck and the compartmentalising of its unique J shaped plan into separate zones for living and sleeping, linked by a service area.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

32 Ursa Street, Balwyn, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Designed in 1950 by architect and planner Harcourt Long while still a student, this house is one of relatively few modernist residences that survive in Boroondara from the austere early postwar years of the late 1940s to early 1950s. The house is notable for its sophisticated and evocative manipulation of modernist features which include a unique J shaped floor plan that zones living and sleeping areas and a wedge shaped living/dining room with steeply pitched skillion roof and large north facing window wall. The house exemplifies the high concentration of architect designed modernist houses built in Balwyn and North Balwyn during the 1950s and 1960s.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

N/A

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).



N/A

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

N/A

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Aesthetically 32 Ursa street, Balwyn North is significant as an unusual, early and substantially intact example of an early modernist house in Balwyn North. The house demonstrates many of the qualities that interested the emerging generation of progressive young architects in the immediate postwar period, notably the use of north-facing courtyard plans, sun decks, generous glazing and skillion roofs with broad eaves (all to take advantage of the passive solar heating principles) as well as zoned planning. In this case, however, these basic tenets of modern residential architecture were transformed through Harcourt Long's own distinctive vision, introducing such particularly bold elements as its J shaped plan and wedge shaped living room wing, with notched corners and huge timber-framed window wall with grid-like configuration of glazing bars.

Although altered by two very minor and discreet stages of addition (both designed by the original architect), the original 1950-52 building dominates, and remains an evocative example of early post-war residential architecture.

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

N/A

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

N/A

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

N/A



Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Davis House at 32 Ursa Street, Balwyn North designed by architect and planner Harcourt Long while still a student in 1950, is significant.

Elements that contribute to significance include:

- J shaped plan with north facing central courtyard
- prominent skillion roof
- pale brick walls with brickwork notched at the external corners
- decorative pattern of projecting header bricks to the garage wall
- original pattern of fenestrations, door openings and window and door joinery
- prominent timber-framed and multi-paned window wall with spandrel clad in vertical timber boards
- early additions designed by the same architect include a basement storeroom and detached garage (1953) and a third bedroom at the rear and a second garage along the street frontage (1956)
- front garden open to the street (no front fence).

How is it significant?

The house is of historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

32 Ursa Street, Balwyn, is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of Boroondara as a locus for fine, leading architect-designed public and private buildings from the 1850s into the postwar period. Designed in 1950 by architect and planner Harcourt Long while still a student, this house is one of relatively few modernist residences that survive in Boroondara from the austere early postwar years of the late 1940s to early 1950s. The house is notable for its sophisticated and evocative manipulation of modernist features which include a unique J shaped floor plan that zones living and sleeping areas and a wedge shaped living/dining room with steeply pitched skillion roof and large north facing window wall. The house exemplifies the high concentration of architect designed modernist houses built in Balwyn and North Balwyn during the 1950s and 1960s. (Criterion A)

Aesthetically 32 Ursa street, Balwyn North is significant as an unusual, early and substantially intact example of an early modernist house in Balwyn North. The house demonstrates many of the qualities that interested the emerging generation of progressive young architects in the immediate postwar period, notably the use of north-facing courtyard plans, sun decks, generous glazing and skillion roofs with broad eaves (all to take advantage of the passive solar heating principles) as well as zoned planning. In this case, however, these basic tenets of modern residential architecture were transformed through Harcourt Long's own distinctive vision, introducing such particularly bold elements as its J shaped plan and wedge shaped living room wing, with notched corners and huge timber-framed window wall with grid-like configuration of glazing bars. Although altered by two very minor and discreet stages of addition (both designed by the original architect), the original 1950-52



building dominates, and remains an evocative example of early post-war residential architecture.
(Criterion E)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an Individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

| | |
|--|----|
| External paint controls | |
| <i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i> | No |
| Internal alteration controls | |
| <i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i> | No |
| Tree controls | |
| <i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i> | No |
| Outbuildings and fences exemptions | |
| <i>Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i> | No |
| Victorian Heritage Register | |
| <i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i> | No |
| Prohibited uses may be permitted | |
| <i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i> | No |
| Aboriginal heritage place | |
| <i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i> | No |
| Incorporated plan | |
| <i>Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?</i> | No |

Identified by:

Built Heritage Pty Ltd 2012.



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