

<b>IDENTIFIER</b>	MAISONNETTES		
<b>Other/s</b>	Glendene		
<b>Address</b>	950 Burke Road BALWYN	<b>Date/s</b>	1939
<b>Designer/s</b>	Stuart W Hall	<b>Builder/s</b>	John Cook
<b>Theme/s</b>	6.7.5 Developing higher density living	<b>Heritage Group</b>	Residential Building (Private)
		<b>Heritage Category</b>	Flat
		<b>Heritage Status</b>	-
<b>Intactness</b>	Excellent	<b>Significance</b>	Local
<b>Condition</b>	Excellent	<b>Recommendation</b>	Include in HO as individual place



<b>Extent</b>	To title boundaries	<b>Survey date</b>	4 May 2016
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## History

This block of six maisonettes, known as *Glendene*, was built in 1939 by a city-based investment firm, the Direct Investment & Mortgage Company Pty Ltd. The brainchild of businessman Stanley Clifford Steele (1888-1953) and his wife Ellen “Nell” Steele (1890-1972), the firm was registered as a public company in December 1930, with a capital of £100,000 and offices at 57 Elizabeth Street. The company’s remit was evidently broad; one early newspaper advertisement reported that “building blocks, shops, villas purchased for quick sale” (*Age*, 21/01/1931:1), while another adopted the slogan “we inspect promptly and buy promptly” (*Age*, 23/04/1931:12). By the mid-1930s, the company had become involved in the construction of new buildings as well as the acquisition and resale of existing ones.

Stanley and Ellen Steele, who married in 1914, lived for many years in Yarraville but moved to Mont Albert around 1930, occupying a house at the corner of Whitehorse Road and York Street. Towards the end of that decade, their company acquired land at the south-east corner of Burke and Whitehorse roads, formerly part of the grounds of the eponymous mansion *Deepdene* (by then, occupying a reduced allotment fronting 946 Burke Road). On 6 March 1939, a building permit was granted for what was described as a 36-room, two-storey, brick and timber dwelling, comprising six maisonettes. On the permit application card, the contract value was recorded as £7,500, and the builder as G A Furse. This was presumably George Furse, who lived nearby at Ross Street, Surrey Hills. Furse, however, evidently did not continue with the project, as his name is crossed out on the card and replaced by the surname ‘Cook’. The MMBW sewerage plan for the building confirms this to have been John Cook, a builder from Brighton.

While no architect is named on the permit documentation, a newspaper write-up confirms that the flats were designed by Stuart W Hall. A little-known figure in Melbourne’s inter-war architectural scene, Stuart William Hall (1909-1960) was born in Perth but moved to Melbourne with his family circa 1920. He began his architectural career in 1930 as an articled pupil to Harold Desbrowe-Anneer, but appears to have remained there for barely a year. Nothing is known of Hall’s professional activities until 1935, when he was employed as an in-house designer with the Premier Building Company. Based at 247 Collins Street, this business was founded by architect Bernard Evans and was responsible for many houses and blocks of flats in Melbourne’s inner suburbs. After the Premier Building Company ceased operation in 1937, Hall began his own practice, advertising himself as an architect even though he did not become registered as such until 1940. When he applied for registration in June that year, he cited this block of flats in Balwyn as one of his recent projects.

The MMBW sewerage plan for the *Glendene* flats records that inspections took place in June 1939, and again in October. In late July, Hall’s design was favourably reviewed in the property column of the *Herald* newspaper (described as being “a special interest for its size and the clever staggering of the layout”). In early September, an advertisement in the *Argus* reported that the flats were “nearing completion”, with one pair already available to let. Referred to as *Glendene*, the complex was described as “six superb maisonettes”, each comprising “entrance hall, large lounge, dining, model kitchen with refrigerator, three unusually bright bedrooms, tiled bathroom with HWS, [and] garage” (*Argus*, 09/09/1939:22). In November, the completed building was profiled in *Age*, described as “a good example” of the emerging trend for maisonettes, and a building that “would do credit to any suburb”.

## Description

Occupying a large site at the junction of two prominent roads, the *Glendene* flats are a two-storey block of six maisonettes. Of brick construction (in contrasting bands of pink and brown brick), the L-shaped complex is laid out on an irregular rectilinear plan that presents staggered facades to both street frontages, with a circular bay at the corner. The building has a hipped roof clad in Marseille-pattern terracotta tiles, while the round bay rises to form a tower with corbelled parapet and conical roof clad in terracotta shingles. Along the two street elevations, the roofline is partly concealed behind curved or gabled parapets, and partly projects forward to form narrow eaves, with slatted timber linings. These two facades are otherwise enlivened by curving corners, rendered spandrels with horizontal flutings, projecting balconies with corbelled bases and metal railings, projecting chimney breasts and slab-like canopies to doorways at both levels. Windows vary in size but have rendered sills and metal-framed sashes; most contain clear glazing, although some have sand-blasted glass or glass blocks. The round tower has a narrow vertical strip window, and also includes the name of the flats in cursive metal letters. Entrances to individual maisonettes typically incorporate small open porches with projecting flower boxes.

To the rear of the complex is an elongated flat-roofed brick outbuilding that comprises a row of six attached garages. The two street boundaries are marked by a bagged-and-painted brick fence with concrete orbs to the piers.

## Integrity

The exterior of the complex appears to be substantially intact. The rear garage block has been painted, and at least one of its original panelled metal tilt-up garage doors has been replaced by a modern roller shutter.

The front boundary fence, of bagged-and-painted brick construction with precast concrete orbs, does not appear to be original. The six-unit letterbox and motorised metal driveway gates are also relatively recent additions.

## Historical Context

As noted in the *City of Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (2012), residential flats proliferated in the former City of Hawthorn in the inter-war period, but were considerably rarer in the Cities of Kew and Camberwell. In Kew, this was due to limited public transport networks. In Camberwell, it was a result of greater distance from the city, by-laws that discouraged the erection of semi-detached dwellings, and some local opposition to higher density living (*Camberwell Conservation Study*, Vol 2, 22-23). Although the construction of flats was not actually banned by the City of Camberwell, relatively few examples were built there during the 1920s and early '30s. They became increasingly common in the later 1930s but, despite lingering community opposition, by-laws to control their design would not be introduced until the post-war era, when local demand for higher-density living increased and numerous blocks of flats, villa units and later townhouses were erected in Camberwell, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

## Comparative Analysis

As mentioned above, residential flats were an unusual typology in Balwyn (and across the entire City of Camberwell) in the inter-war era. It has been suggested that an example at 7 Mangan Street, erected by F W Le Leu in 1933, represents the earliest such development in Balwyn area (*Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter*, 03/2010). While it might thus be deemed of some local interest, the building itself is otherwise aesthetically undistinguished. With its simple form, plain clinker brick construction, tile-clad gabled roof and little architectural pretension, it can only be considered as a representative example of 1930s apartment design rather than a particularly notable one. The same can be said of several later examples that have been identified, such as the two adjacent double-storey blocks at 203 and 205 Whitehorse Road. Dating from c.1936 (and possibly designed by architect Verner Fick), these are similarly unprepossessing in their simple form, expression, materials and lack of architectural embellishment. Although somewhat more architecturally interesting, the former *Chaddesley Flats* at 2 Hardwick Street (formerly 199 Whitehorse Road) do not represent a pertinent comparator, as they actually comprise a former late-Victorian house that was converted into flats in 1934 by the addition of a substantial rear wing in a Tudor Revival style (apparently also by F W Le Leu). The building has since been re-converted to a single private residence.

In terms of both scale and architectural expression, the *Glendene Flats* at 950 Burke Road not only stands out amongst the few 1930s blocks in Balwyn, but also those across the former City of Camberwell. Befitting the municipality's pre-war reputation as a "dormitory suburb" characterised by housing in more conservative styles such as Spanish Mission and Tudor Revival, most 1930s blocks of flats in Camberwell and Canterbury were designed in a deliberately traditional mode. This is typified by two examples in Wattle Valley Road, at Nos 63 and 130. Designed by architects Gawler & Drummond in 1936 and 1937 respectively, both blocks drew from a conservative palette of materials and detailing including clinker brickwork and steep tiled roofs, with little architectural embellishment. The *Cloville Flats* at 31-39 Cookson Street, dating from 1939, were conceived in an even more *retardataire* quasi-Edwardian style.

Highly unusual in the City of Boroondara, the architecturally eclectic *Glendene* flats ultimately have far more in common with the more bombastic apartment developments of the later 1930s that characterise areas such as Elwood and St Kilda. In fact, two pertinent comparators in those areas would include those blocks at 110 Brighton Road and 4 St Leonards Avenue, both of which were erected by the Premier Building Company and may have included design input from Stuart W Hall.

## Grading and recommendation

The *Glendene* flats at 950 Burke Road, Balwyn, are an individually significant heritage place in the City of Boroondara.

It is recommended for inclusion in the schedule to the heritage overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

Erected in 1939 to a design by architect Stuart W Hall, the *Glendene* flats at 950 Burke Road, Balwyn, are a two-storey block of brick maisonettes with a hipped terracotta tiled roof and a circular corner tower with conical roof. The stepped street facades incorporate an eclectic mix of elements and details including rendered spandrels, cantilevered canopies, projecting balconies with metal railings, and porches with planter boxes.

The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of the entire building. The detached garage block to the rear, although contemporaneous with the flats, is utilitarian in its expression and is thus considered to be only a contributory element. The metal driveway gates, brick boundary fence and landscaping are not considered to be significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The *Glendene* flats satisfy the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Boroondara Planning Scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history;
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

### *Why is it significant?*

The *Glendene* flats are significant as the largest, most prominent and most architecturally sophisticated block of flats to be erected in the Balwyn area in the inter-war era. With relatively few examples erected in the area until the later 1930s, the large and ambitious *Glendene* flats provide evidence of changing local attitudes towards higher density living that anticipated the subsequent proliferation of flats, villa units and town-houses in the area in the post-war era. (*Criterion A*).

The *Glendene* flats are significant for their bold and unusual architectural expression. Designed at a time when historicist architectural styles remained popular in parallel with the maturing modernist movement, this building deftly combined a mix of elements, materials and details from both camps. The corner tower with conical roof and terracotta shingles recalls the Tudor Revival idiom, while the horizontal fluted spandrel, glass blocks, vertical strip window and projecting slab-like balconies and canopies evoke the emerging Moderne style. The resulting eclecticism is eye-catching without being jarring. The unusual combination of influences, coupled with the sheer scale and prominent siting of the building at the intersection of two major thoroughfares, has resulted in an especially striking element in the suburban landscape (*Criterion E*).

## Identified By

Built Heritage Pty Ltd

## References

City of Camberwell Building Permit Application No 11,094, dated 6 March 1939.

MMBW Property Sewerage Plan No 212988. 2 pp, dated 6 Jun 1939 and 23 Oct 1939. Held by Yarra Valley Water.

"Six maisonettes planned for Camberwell", *Herald*, 26 July 1939.

"Maisonettes", *Argus*, 9 September 1939.

"Maisonettes popular", *Age*, 7 November 1939 [see also errata of 14 November 1939, correcting wrong address.]