

## BEDDISON/SWIFT HOUSE

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<b>Address</b>	5 Crown Road, Ivanhoe
<b>Significance</b>	Local
<b>Construction Date</b>	1963
<b>Period</b>	Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century
<b>Date Inspected</b>	January 2021



### Statement of Significance

#### What is Significant?

*Beddison/Swift House* at 5 Crown Road, Ivanhoe is significant. It was designed in 1962 by the architectural practice of (Guilford Marsh) Bell & (Neil) Clerehan to a brief provided by the related Beddison and Swift families, joint owners of the property, for a multi-generational dwelling. Construction occurred the year after.

The significant elements are the cuboid and interlinked single-storey 'unit' and rear two-storey 'block', flat roofs, steel decking cladding, white-painted fascia, the sunken courtyard, carport, stained timber square posts and beams, walls of 'Jay Besser' brick, rear double-height timber 'verandah', and original fenestration (mainly timber-framed full-height French windows and sheeted Mountain Ash plywood doors).

The Lemon-scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) in the courtyard and front garden (north) are significant trees. As is likely mature Prickly-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca styhelioides*), also in the front garden (south). The native/indigenous whole-site landscape treatment, compact gravel driveway, post box, concrete panel crossover and basalt kerbing complement the *Beddison/Swift House*.

Some original elements in the interior are also of significance, specifically hardwood timber floorboards, internal walls lined with timber battens or plastered, and the open timber staircase.

Later additions are not significant.

## How is it Significant?

*Beddison/Swift House* is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Banyule.

## Why is it Significant?

*Beddison/Swift House* is of historical significance as one of the relatively small number of designs undertaken by the progressive – if uneasy and fleeting – partnership of Bell & Clerehan. Their architectural response to the atypical request of the clients for multi-generational living was elegantly simple and direct, revolving around a one-storey 'unit' for the older Beddisons at the front of the property with an attached, two-storey 'block' for the younger Swifts family to the rear. Neil Clerehan, then consolidating his reputation as one of Melbourne's leading modernists and architectural commentators, was largely responsible for the design. Such architect-crafted expressions of a 'modern' lifestyle still compromised only a minority of developments in the municipality during the early 1960s and are emphatic illustrations of the lifestyle and aesthetic shifts occurring at the time. More broadly, *Beddison/Swift House* reflects the pronounced engagement with professional architects by owners of undeveloped, sloping property along the banks of the *Birrarung/Yarra* River in the Ivanhoe area, commencing in the postwar years, which endowed the locale with a distinctive layer of modernist design. (Criterion A)

*Beddison/Swift House* is of aesthetic significance as a refined and largely intact example of Bell & Clerehan's work, which exemplified the classicised and minimalist currents of international modernism in the early 1960s. It is now the foremost example of their oeuvre in Banyule. The two finely proportioned, pared-back cuboid forms that comprise the plan share an urbane carport and sunken courtyard with feature gum. The distinct volumes of the residences are offset from each other, an aspect heightened by contrasting solid-to-void ratios, with the frontage of the 'unit' featuring symmetrically arranged full-height French windows against the planar backdrop of the rear 'block', which is only punctured by a single entrance door. This relationship is reversed to the rear, with more generous glazing provided to the 'block' to capitalise on the available views. *Beddison/Swift House's* material palette of pale brown brick and darkly stained timber unifies the design and harmonises the building within its well-landscaped site. Overall, the effect is serene and understated, attributes that continue into the interior. (Criterion E)

## Description

*Beddison/Swift House* occupies the centre of a large rectangular allotment that falls away from Crown Road, providing it with a roughly similar sized front and rear garden. Its siting responds to both the natural gradient of the allotment and the brief of its first occupants for a dwelling that allowed multigenerational living. The outcome was two individual but interlinked cuboid forms – a single-storey 'unit' to the front of the site, accommodating the Beddisons (a couple) with a two-storey block for the Swifts (husband-and-wife and children) to the rear. The latter took advantage of the natural and contrived incline to reduce its height and presence to the street. The front 'unit' has a narrow side setback from the west boundary, which is largely mirrored by the rear building's relationship to the east boundary.

Views to *Beddison/Swift House* from Crown Road are heavily screened by landscaping, a purposeful aspect of the original design. Accordingly, this description partially based on photographs in the public domain, submitted plans and the original specifications.<sup>1</sup>

*Beddison/Swift House's* composition is distinctive, presenting as two geometric volumes offset against each other, each contrasted by their solid-to-void ratio as discernible from the street. Such a considered but simplified form was true to type for its main designer, Clerehan:

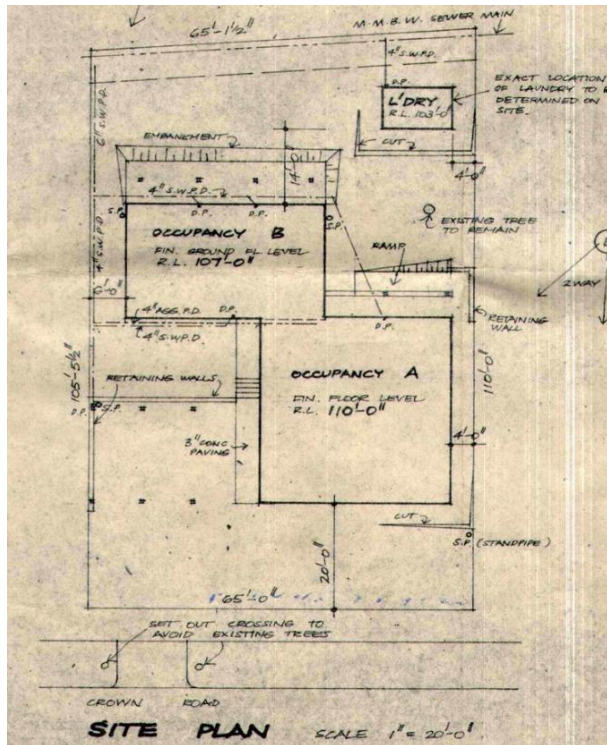
I was and still am intrigued with living patterns, actual and possible, and the architectonic expression was and is to me only a frame for those patterns. Therefore I never produce intriguing forms.<sup>2</sup>

Both parts of the house have a flat, initially clad in '24-gauge Brownbuilt steel decking', which may remain. The roof of the front unit continues over the carport. White painted fascias serve to accentuate the impression that both parts are 'capped'. Broad eaves with mostly steel-lined soffit are evident to the Beddisons' unit and allow for the strong interplay of light and shadow across the façade. Eaves to Swifts' block are close-fitting, except to the rear elevation. Small skylights (three per occupancy) are original.

<sup>1</sup> Woodards, '5 Crown Road, Ivanhoe, January 2019, [www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-house-vic-ivanhoe-129746342](http://www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-house-vic-ivanhoe-129746342); Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, *Dual House at 22 Crown Road, Ivanhoe*, Drawing nos 1 and 2, September 1962, City of Banyule, planning archive; and Guilford Bell and Neil Clerehan, *Specification of Materials and Workmanship To Be Used In The Erection Of A Brick Veneer Dual House, Lot 1, Crown Road, Ivan, For Messrs. O.R. Beddison and D. Swift*, September 1962 (City of Banyule, planning archive)

<sup>2</sup> Neil Clerehan, letter to Philip Goad, 10 November 1984 in Philip Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945 – 1975*, PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, September 1992, chapter 6, pp62/3





Close-up of original site plan

Occupancy A (single storey, Beddisons) and Occupancy B (two storey, Swifts)

(Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, *Dual House at 22 Crown Road, Ivanhoe*, Drawing no 1, September 1962, City of Banyule, planning archive)

The residence was of reinforced concrete construction with veneer walls of pale, earthy/brown coloured 'Jay Besser' bricks (long/thin dimensions) set in a stretcher bond. Mortar was tinted to match the brickwork, bestowing the impression of a singular, cohesive plane to the walls. A 'Nonporite' damp course was also specified. Such a minimal palette of materials and finishes is commensurate with much of Clerehan's work (as well as Bell's).



View to carport with the two-storey Swift block, behind the sunken courtyard, evident to the rear

A shared double carport – both stylish and practical – forms a key component of the house's streetscape presentation, defining the entrance to both parts of *Beddison/Swift House*. 'Fine sawn Oregon' timber was employed for the slender square posts (x6) and hefty double beams (x3). This timber appears to have been stained rather than painted, preserving its intrinsic character. The carport's roof was clad in 22-gauge galvanised steel 'Mondeck' appears to remain. It was left exposed underneath, juxtaposing the metal bays against the timber beams. The floor of the carport is of compacted crushed gravel, which also surfaces the driveway, which terminates with the precast concrete panelled crossover. The post box on the west side of the driveway – a horizontal timber box raised on a circle pole – is also original.

Similar to Clerehan's *Box House* (see Comparative Analysis), the dark timber of the carport's posts and beams, when viewed against the backdrop of the rear block's solid brick wall, provides for a subtle play of line and plane.

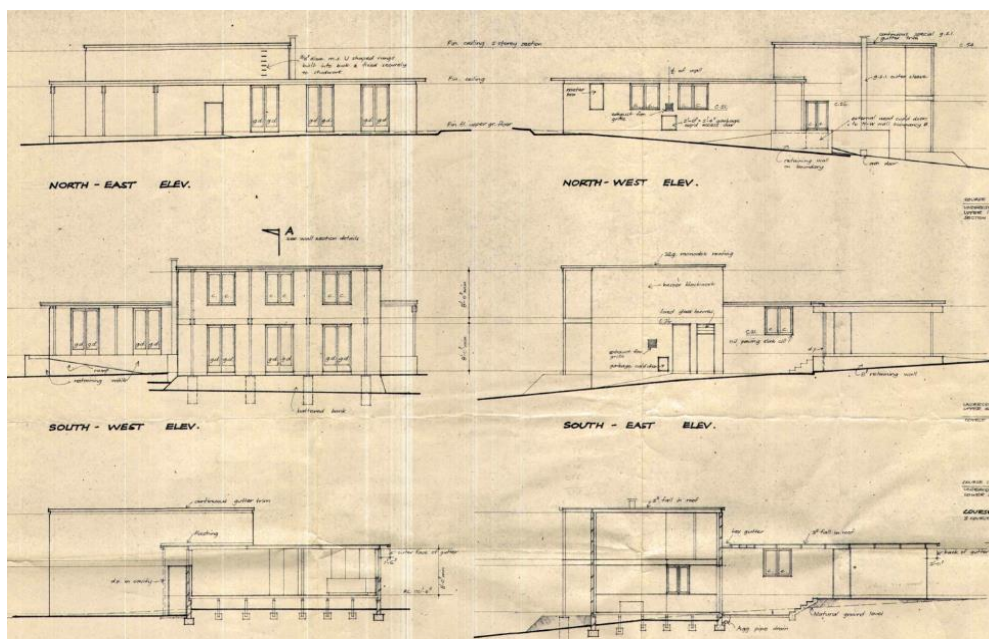
The front unit is accessed from the carport, with the entry a tall solid door (sheeted Mountain Ash plywood, clear finish) set in the east elevation. The rear unit entrance (door obscured) is situated over the compact and pebbled sunken courtyard that separates the Swifts' block from the carport. It is accessed via a short descending staircase and tiled path set against the front wing's east elevation. The projecting eave provides shelter (note timber soffit) to the path.

A mature Lemon-scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) defines the courtyard. From the street, this tree looks to be growing through the building's envelope. While not shown on the original plans (others are), it is evident as a juvenile specimen in a Peter Wille photograph, likely dating from the mid-to-late 1960s (see Site-specific), which suggest it was planted at an early stage.

Full height, recessed openings in the form of timber-framed glazed French windows/doors (sills of 'selected jarrah') are utilised to both the front and rear of the occupancies, chiefly in groups of three. There are also three double casement windows to the first-storey of the block's rear elevation. Such fenestration allows for garden views, spatial flow between the inside and outdoor and provides benefit for the dwelling's living spaces. The symmetry of these openings is resolute. Bell reportedly 'insisted' that a glazed French door be used for the street-fronting bathroom of the Beddisons unit so as not to disrupt the balance, despite the issue of privacy.<sup>3</sup> Timber-framed flyscreens are original throughout.

Windows to the side elevations are timber-framed casements with square proportions. Two tall doors were also apparent to the eastern elevation. Some of these elements have been altered or removed (see below, Summary of Modifications).

At the rear of the Beddison unit is a raised porch (brick retaining wall), surmounted by a section of the main roof that is supported by two square timber posts. An L-shaped ramp connects it to the backyard. The roof of the Swifts' block breaks forward of the rear (south) elevation creating a double-height 'verandah'. It comprises four timber posts affixed midway up the wall by bolted horizontal beams, articulating the design's interest in a well-resolved balance and subtle gestures to expressed structure. The small terrace it covered has recently been extended as a timber deck.



Extract of original elevations and sections of *Beddison/Swift House* (Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, *Dual House* at 22 Crown Road, Ivanhoe, Drawing no 2, September 1962)

<sup>3</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p38



*Beddison/Swift House* was erected in the grounds of a former garden, and efforts were made to preserve the various trees (original site plan instructions, 'set out crossing to avoid existing trees'). Such specimens were likely considered attractive and useful in maintaining privacy. Accordingly, the pair of mature trees that dominate the front garden – another Lemon-scented gum (north) and what is likely a Prickly-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca styhelioides*) (south) – likely precede the dwelling. This landscape buffer has a verdant undergrowth and is mulched to the basalt kerbing of Crown Road. There is no front fence. Rear and side fencing appear to be later additions. In general, both the front and rear garden is landscaped with natives/indigenous plantings and some scattered boulders evident. Such an embrace of the Australian 'bush garden' was an emergent trend over the early 1960s.



Beddisons' unit, filtered through the landscaped front garden – trunk of north Lemon-scented gum apparent left of frame

In the north-west part of the rear garden is a detached single-roomed and flat-roofed laundry room. Its materials mirror that of the primary dwelling, including reinforced concrete floor slab. The laundry is situated at the bottom of an artificial 'cut' (detailed on the original site plan). The site plan also details that an existing tree between the laundry and the rear of the front unit be retained. It is likely the extant specimen, which may be an English Elm (*Ulmus procera*). There is a non-original shed in the south-west corner of the backyard.

*Beddison/Swift House* interior has undergone some recent alterations and additions (circa 2020), which have affected the original internal layout.<sup>4</sup> The latter was characterised by a stripped-back aesthetic and free-flowing, uncluttered space. Key internal elements that appear to remain are hardwood timber floorboards,<sup>5</sup> plain timber skirting, unbroken timber batten lining to some walls, thin cornices with mitred corners, white-painted fibrous plaster walls and ceilings ('all fixings disguised'), mosaic tiling pointed with white cement (kitchens and bathroom), open timber staircase and balustrade, solid full-height timber Mountain Ash doors, and built-in furniture.

The hearth of the original brick fireplace (living room/Swifts' block) appears to have been infilled. Other changes to the two-storey block include the removal of some internal walls, provision of new partition walls, infill of some side elevation openings with matching brick and replacement of one door (south elevation) with a new glazed insert, creation of a new entry (south-west common wall) between the Beddisons' and Swifts' wings (sliding door) with new steps and landing from the single-storey unit (Beddison), and replacement of joinery in kitchen and laundry.

The design of *Beddison/Swift House* is deliberately understated and discrete. Clerehan's underlying goal, consistent throughout his work, was to provide a 'calm backdrop for everyday living'.<sup>6</sup> Bell's design aims were similar. In the wake of the 1950s – Victorian architecture's 'heroic' decade – such qualities stood it apart from mainstream modernism, which stressed the creation of bold visuals and/or structural exhibitionism. *Beddison/Swift House* illustrates a mature application of the International Style, particularly Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's minimalism, reformulated to local conditions; a softened severity and 'highly sophisticated arrangement of unpretentious elements'.<sup>7</sup>

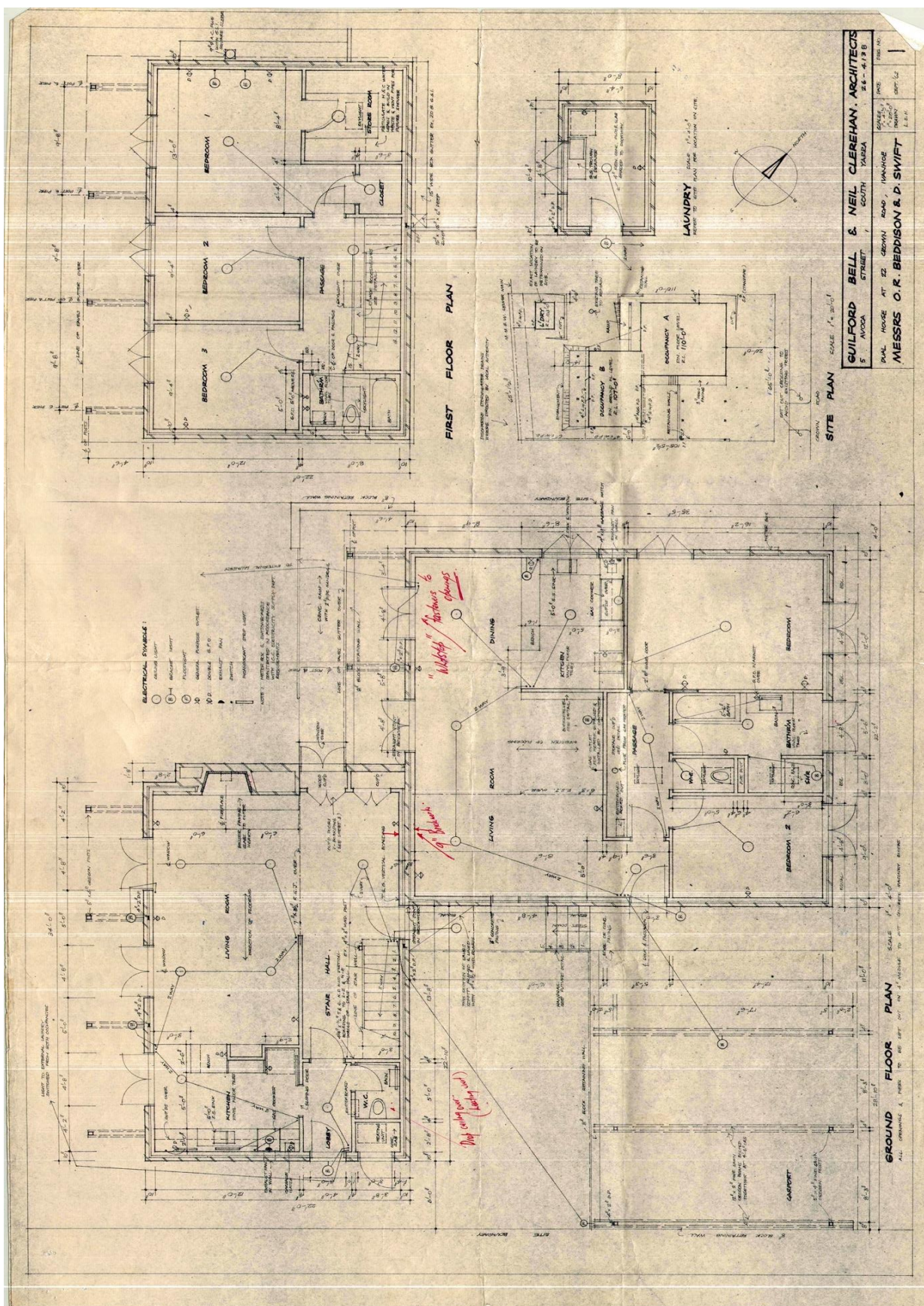
<sup>4</sup> JaneCameronArchitects, 5 Crown Road Ivanhoe (series of plans), permit number P34/2020, provided by the City of Banyule

<sup>5</sup> 'T & G Hardwood floor' 'in long lengths' with 'punched nails' and 'sand finish' – *Specifications*

<sup>6</sup> Goad, 'Foreword', in Harriet Edquist and Richard Black, *The Architecture of Neil Clerehan*, RMIT University Press, 2005, p9

<sup>7</sup> Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne*, chapter 6, p62





Original site and floor plan, *Beddison/Swift House*

(Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, *Dual House at 22 Crown Road, Ivanhoe*, Drawing no 1, September 1962)



## History

### Context

The City of Banyule covers the unceded Country of the Wurundjeri-willam people, who have inhabited and managed its landscape for thousands of generations and maintain an ongoing cultural connection.<sup>8</sup> The lightly wooded grasslands of what became known as 'Ivanhoe' were quickly targeted for sheep runs and by timber-cutters from the 'illegal squatter camp' downstream of the *Birrarung*/Yarra at Melbourne (est. 1835).<sup>9</sup> However, as part of the 'Heidelberg' district in the Parish of Keelbundora, this area passed rapidly into private hands via an auction in Sydney Town in 1838.<sup>10</sup>

Over the following decade, a patchwork of 'prestige' estates emerged, along with a surveyed township – *Warringal* (possibly 'eagle's nest'), later 'Heidelberg' – on the river's west bank.<sup>11</sup> Productive river flats, and the demands of the gold diggings further afield, encouraged market gardening, orchards and (gradually, due to soil exhaustion and flooding) dairying; activities mostly undertaken by tenant farmers.<sup>12</sup> This perceived rural idyll enticed *plein air* artists to the district during the 1880s, fixing the 'Heidelberg School' within Australia's artistic consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Ivanhoe – its name stemming from Archibald Thom's 'Ivanhoe Estate' – remained a sparsely populated agricultural area until Melbourne's 'Land Boom' in the late 1880s.<sup>14</sup> 'Picturesque' terrain, varied outlooks and the high repute of the broader district drew affluent newcomers. By the turn of the century, 'Beautiful Ivanhoe' was routinely portrayed as a 'fashionable', 'exclusive locality' of 'model homes'.<sup>15</sup> An improved railway connection to Melbourne in 1901 supported further middle-class growth, instigating 'four decades of slow and relatively affluent suburban sprawl' in the vicinity of Ivanhoe, Eaglemont, and Heidelberg train stations.<sup>16</sup>

During the interwar years, suburban Ivanhoe solidified, although its southern and eastern reaches remained primarily locked up by the expansive 'Hartlands', 'Charterisville', and 'Chelsworth' estates.<sup>17</sup> To navigate the complexities that accompanied the subdivision of these areas (sloping land, curving streets, views) in the postwar period and galvanised by the swelling influence of modernism, many of the new, generally affluent proprietors sought the services of an architect.<sup>18</sup> By the early 1960s, distinct enclaves of upmarket, modernist design culture were apparent in the southern reaches of Ivanhoe and Ivanhoe East, with the aesthetic and lifestyle reverberations of the modern movement also shaping infill development in the more established environs of the locale.



View near Heidelberg in Victoria, pen and ink drawing, circa 1858  
(Source: Eugene von Guérard, National Gallery of Victoria)

<sup>8</sup> Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018, pp15-20, available online

<sup>9</sup> James Boyce, 1835: *The Founding of Melbourne & The Conquest of Australia*, Black Inc., 2011, pxi

<sup>10</sup> Keelbundora stems from a European rendering of Kulbundora – the name of the eldest son of the important Wurundjeri *ngurungaeta* (essentially 'head man') Billibellary. ('Suburban Native Names', *Argus* 28 April 1906, p5). One of the earliest manifestations of local governance in the Port Phillip District (1840), the fluctuating borders of municipal Heidelberg mirrored its growth, as it was reformatting into a Road District (1860), Shire (1871) and then City (1934). It was amalgamated as the City of Banyule in 1994.

<sup>11</sup> Donald S Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People 1838-1900*, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p13

<sup>12</sup> Robert P Whitworth, *Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer*, F F Bailliere, 1879, pp237

<sup>13</sup> Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.5, and 2.3.10

<sup>14</sup> Thom's estate designation was inspired by a novel of the same name by Sir Walter Scott (1819).

<sup>15</sup> Ivanhoe & Alphington Progress Society, *Beautiful Ivanhoe: the suburb of model homes and scenic charm*, Model Studio, 1900, SLV

<sup>16</sup> Ivanhoe Station opened in 1888; however, inefficiencies in the Heidelberg-Melbourne railway line initially bedevilled growth.

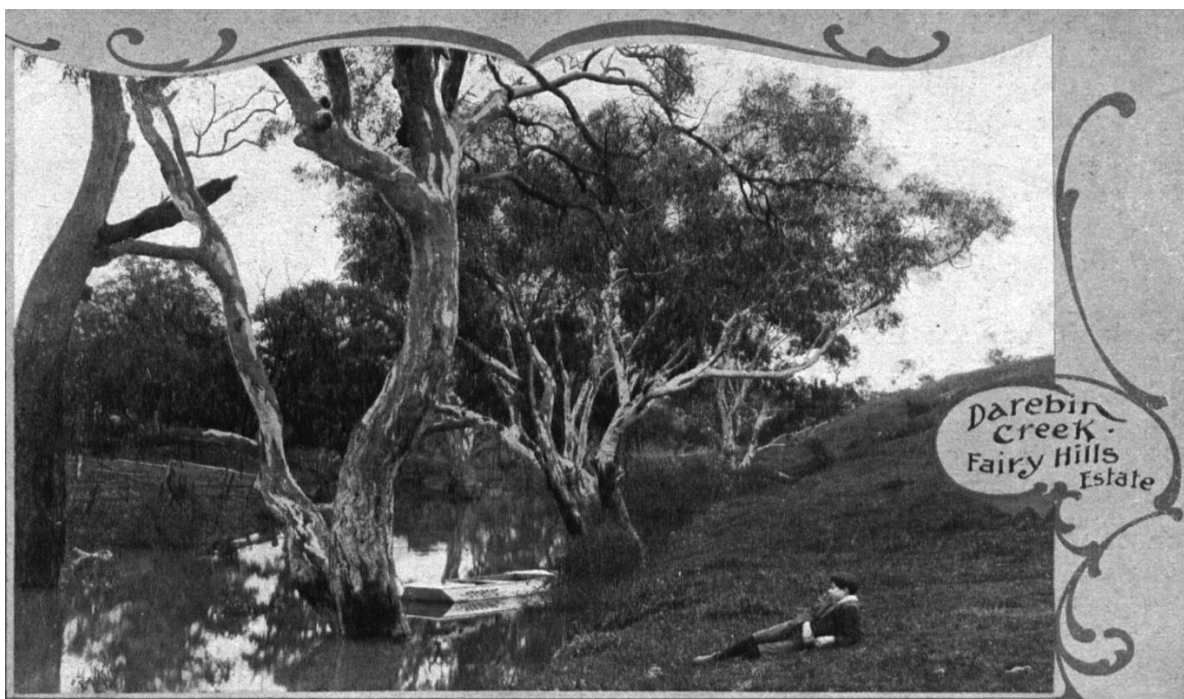
<sup>17</sup> Ivanhoe grew from roughly 2,000 residents in 1913 to nearly 8,000 by 1933 (*Victorian Year Books*, Australian Bureau of Statistics).

<sup>18</sup> Don Garden, 'Ivanhoe', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, July 2008

### Site-specific

The subject land derives from Portion 1 (510 hectares) of the Parish of Keelbundora, purchased (along with portions 2 and 3) by Thomas Walker in 1838. A Sydney-based Scottish banker and philanthrope with an eye for marketable land across the colony, Walker's intention in the Port Philip District was speculative from the start. He commenced subdividing his acquisitions as early as mid-1839, amassing enormous profit.<sup>19</sup>

The western half of Portion 1, which incorporates the subject site, was subdivided into multiple parcels and advertised as the 'Glanville Estate' from October 1839: 'Suburban Farms and Villa Sites ... the fertility and beauty of which are not to be surpassed in that region of Fertile Soil and Beautiful Landscape Scenery'.<sup>20</sup> Around 1856, the Essex-born pastoralist and investor Francis Clark purchased about 22 hectares of the Glanville Estate (loosely, Heidelberg Road to Darebin Creek and the Yarra).<sup>21</sup> He erected a commodious stone residence (near the southwest corner of Elphin Street and Waterdale Road, demolished in 1956), designating this holding the 'Fairy Hills Estate'.<sup>22</sup> The name, referring to the part of Ivanhoe between Darebin Creek and Chelsworth Park, was current throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and remains in popular and official usage.



Photograph of Darebin Creek, which formed the western and southern boundary of the Fairy Hills Estate  
(Source: Ivanhoe and Alphington Progress Society, *Beautiful Ivanhoe: the suburb of model homes and scenic charm*, early 1900s, SLV)

Clark's widow, Henrietta, remained in occupation of the estate's original residence until 1930. At her death, the *Argus* remarked that her life 'recalls days when the district of Fairy Hills was a single estate and not the garden suburb it has since become', noting that her family had been progressively subdividing the property during her lifetime.<sup>23</sup> By the late interwar years, the Fairy Hills locale had become more defined as a housing precinct, including in the vicinity of the subject land, where two houses associated with celebrated artists had arisen – the *McGeorge House* (1911), by leading society architect Harold Desbrowe Anear, at 25 Riverside Road (VHR H2004, HO51) and the *Waller House* (1922) for Napier and Christian Waller at 9-9A Crown Road (VHR H0617, HO22).

As part of the Clark family's subdivision of Fairy Hills Estate, the land west of Riverside Road to Darebin Creek and, roughly, south of Crown Road was excised in 1911.<sup>24</sup> Further subdivision took place. In 1917 Eliza C Clements of 'Fairy Hills Ivanhoe Married Women' purchased just over a quarter of a hectare at the intersection of Crown and Riversdale roads (now 1 and 5

<sup>19</sup> W Joy, 'Walker, Thomas (1804-1886)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1967, available online

<sup>20</sup> 'Sale by Auction: Land at Port Phillip', *Commercial Journal and Advertiser*, 5 October 1839, p4

<sup>21</sup> Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People 1838-1900*, p15, pp80-1

<sup>22</sup> Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People 1838-1900*, p81; and Graeme Butler, *Heidelberg Conservation Study: Part 1 – Heidelberg Historic Buildings & Areas Assessment*, November 1985, p25

<sup>23</sup> 'Mrs. Francis Clark', *Argus*, 28 September 1938, p2

<sup>24</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 3475, folio 817



Crown Road, 24 and 25 Riversdale Road).<sup>25</sup> The Clements were living there soon after, at a house set well back from Riversdale Street.<sup>26</sup> The balance of the site appears to have been cultivated as a garden.



1945 aerial photograph of the southern part of Fairy Hills, Ivanhoe with the Clements property, incorporating the subject land, outlined in red (Source: Ringwood AIC, Zone 7, Photo-map 849-a1, The University of Melbourne)

Eliza's death in 1959 triggered a re-subdivision of the property, resulting in the creation of the subject allotment (Lot 1).<sup>27</sup> Around this time, the Clements' house was also demolished, seemingly to facilitate more intensive development.

In January 1963, David and Brenda Ivy Swift and Oliver Rex and Ivy Augusta Beddison were registered as the joint proprietors of Lot 1.<sup>28</sup> Oliver (1897-1968) and Ivy (*nee* Sapel, 1898-1983) had married in 1921. Brenda (1926-?), their daughter, had married David (1917-2012) at the Unitarian Church, East Melbourne in 1948.<sup>29</sup>

Since the early 1930s, Oliver Beddison had directed a firm – variously known as Beddison and Staples, Beddison & Sapel – that manufactured 'small wood ware', with a factory in Fairfield and later Clifton Hill.<sup>30</sup> His operation was one of the first in Victoria to produce timber (Queensland hoop pine) ice cream spoons and sticks, which apparently gained him a sizable market share.<sup>31</sup> Some iteration of this firm (O.R. Beddison Pty Ltd) may have continued into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, directed by Oliver's son (Douglas Rex Beddison) in South Australia.<sup>32</sup>

David was a public servant of Jewish ancestry who served in the Australian Army during the Second World War.<sup>33</sup> He had a lengthy career in the public service, starting in the Victorian Mines Department in 1935 (aged 17) and rising to 'officer in charge' of State Film Centre (1957-79), an innovative public organisation described as a 'film library for the whole community... [a]

<sup>25</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 4073, folio 424

<sup>26</sup> *Sands & McDougall's Directory of Victoria*, 1918

<sup>27</sup> LP 56011, Certificate of Title, vol 4073, folio 424

<sup>28</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 8364m folio 894

<sup>29</sup> 'Weddings Celebrated', *Argus*, 13 November 1948, p7

<sup>30</sup> 'Ice-cream Spoons. Outlet for Local Timbers', *Age*, 24 November 1939, p12. From the mid-1940s, Oliver was listed as the co-director of Lignum [Latin for wood] Trading Company Pty Ltd (*Argus*, 15 April 1946, p21)

<sup>31</sup> Tariff Board, *Spoons and Sticks for Ice Cream*, Commonwealth of Australia, 5 February 1940, p3

<sup>32</sup> 'Plywood Sales Officer', *Age*, 14 July 1984, p82

<sup>33</sup> Australian Military Forces, *Service and Casualty Form*, undated, via Ancestry.com

magnificent collection of 16 mm films, rivalling in variety even that of the National Library'.<sup>34</sup> He was the author of many a letter to the editor, particularly in *The Age*, which ranged from matters concerned with television and the ABC to issues of culture and governance.<sup>35</sup> In 1979, David received an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his public service.<sup>36</sup> Brenda was often described as an 'actress' in electoral rolls, although in what medium is unknown.<sup>37</sup>



David Swift, Chief Executive Officer of the State Film Centre  
(Source: Colin Bennet, 'At The Cinema', *Age*, 15 October 1960, p19)

The Beddisons and Swifts planned to live together at Lot 1 in a 'dual house' – David, Brenda and children to the rear in the two-storey block, with grandparents Oliver and Ivy in the front unit.<sup>38</sup> Evidently, this idea had been in germination prior to the formal acquisition of the land (January 1963), as the plans submitted to the City of Heidelberg by their engaged architectural practice, Bell & Clerehan, were dated September 1962.<sup>39</sup> Before their land acquisition on Crown Road, they appear to have lived at the same address in Griffiths Street, Reservoir.<sup>40</sup>

Construction of *Beddison/Swift House* (initially listed at 3 Crown Road) occurred during 1963, undertaken by C Burnett & Sons, contractors based in Ashburton with costs estimated at £12,943 – a reasonably large sum in the period for a private house.<sup>41</sup> Existing trees along the Crown Road frontage of the site, planted by the Clements' were retained as part of the Beddison/Swift redevelopment.<sup>42</sup> The Swifts remained at the house until at least the early 1980s.<sup>43</sup>

No details of the relationship between the Beddisons/Swifts and the architects, Guilford Bell and Neil Clerehan, have come to light. The Bell & Clerehan partnership had only formed in 1962, something of a forced union due to the 'credit squeeze' of 1961. Conceivably, the public attention garnered by their lauded first joint project, the *Simon House* (33 Daveys Bay Road, Mount Eliza) attracted the Beddisons/Swifts. Equally, as likely, it could have been either Clerehan or Bell's mounting individual reputations as deft designers of elegantly modern liveable houses, which differed from the bulk of dwellings under construction at the time, memorably dismissed by Clerehan in his *Best Australian Houses* (1961):

... the vernacular Australian House of 1960 was a rather pathetic, inadequate answer to any problem it might have set out to solve... On its hardwood frame would hang external weatherboarding, a veneer of brickwork or a skin of asbestos. On its roof (hipped) would lie tiles (in Marseilles pattern of terra cotta or cement pressed to look like terra cotta). On either side of its central hall would be a bedroom and a living room ... All these compartments were contained in a shape which rarely deferred to site, sun, suitability or beauty. It was as simple as a bewildered industry dared offer to customers who abhorred simplicity.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Swift, 'Take our hands from your pockets', *Age*, 13 May 1991, p10 and 'Minister's mistaken', *Age*, 21 October 1981, p12

<sup>35</sup> For instance, 'Unhappy innuendoes about migrants', *Age*, 3 November 1972, p8 and 'Jolly gets the sums right but the human equations wrong', *Age*, 15 April 1987, p12

<sup>36</sup> 'The New Year Honours List', *Canberra Times*, 31 December 1979, p8

<sup>37</sup> Ancestry.com

<sup>38</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p38

<sup>39</sup> Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan, *Dual House at 22 Crown Road, Ivanhoe: Messrs O. R. Beddison & D. Swift*, September 1962, Drawing nos 1 and 2, City of Banyule planning archive

<sup>40</sup> Certificate of Title, vol 8364m folio 894

<sup>41</sup> In 1951, the average cost of building a five-roomed house was £3,000. (Robin Boyd, *Australia's Home*, Melbourne University, 1961, p102). Construction details sourced from 'City of Heidelberg Building Permit' (collection of various applications), City of Banyule, planning archive

<sup>42</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p38

<sup>43</sup> 'Subdivision of Ivanhoe', Electoral Roll, 1980, p57; and Certificate of Title, vol 8365, folio 894

<sup>44</sup> Neil Clerehan, *Best Australian Houses: recent houses built by members of The Royal Australian Institute of Architects*, F W Cheshire, 1961, introduction



Clerehan is credited with being primarily responsible for *Beddison/Swift House* design, with Bell playing a lesser role. Architectural historian Harriet Edquist describes their short-lived office as operating 'more or less as two identifiable practices', responsible for about twelve houses.<sup>45</sup> Clerehan and Bell's union was not congenial. Despite an ostensibly shared desired aesthetic, both held divergent design philosophies and handled clients differently:

Clerehan's concerns with living patterns, the almost objective framing of human habitation, was quite different from Bell's highly formal and aesthetic approach which seemed to restrict habitation to a sort of hermetic 'ritual'.<sup>46</sup>

In 1965, two years after construction, *Beddison/Swift House* was published in the widely read magazine *Australian Home Beautiful* (AHB) in a two-page spread, entitled 'Two Families Share View':

This dual house, at 3 Crown Road., Ivanhoe, was designed by Guilford Bell and Neil Clerehan Pty. Ltd., to house a family and grandparents.

The site sloped to the rear overlook Merri Creek [*misidentified?*] and the Latrobe golf course. The family is Mr and Mrs O. R. Beddison and their children, and the grandparents are Mr and Mrs D. Swift.

As the unit was two-storeyed, the slope was graded to varying levels to minimise the contrast between the rear unit and the single-storeyed front unit occupied by the grandparents. These units were off-set and main rooms placed to the rear to get the view. Both bedrooms and bathrooms of the front flat overlook the garden, so these rooms were given full-height glazed double doors. Toilet and passage of this unit were lit and ventilated by a dome-light, and the kitchen, living and dining rooms open planned.

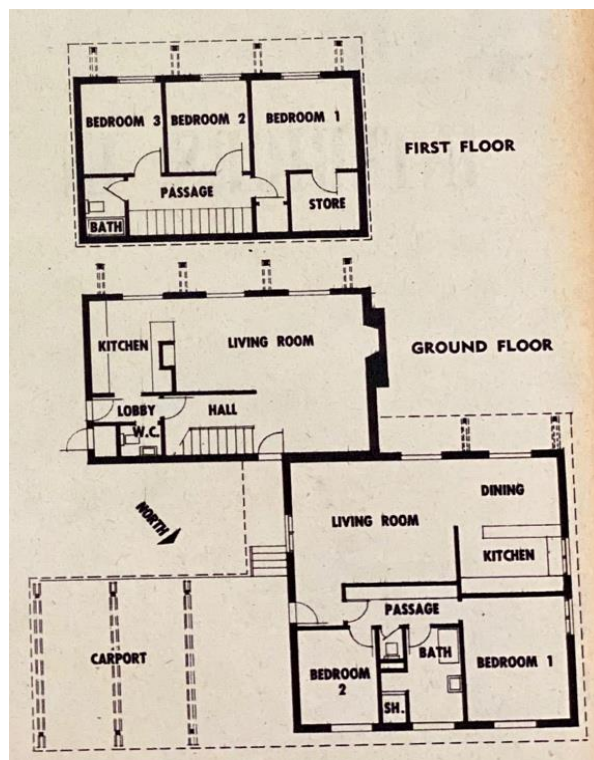
Hall, large living-dining room and kitchen are on the ground floor of the rear unit, and three bedrooms and a store-dressingroom are on the first floor. The store room can convert to an additional shower room later. All necessary pipes and vents have been built in. This storey's hall and dressing room are lit and ventilated by plastic roof domes.

All internal timber is limed natural-finish mountain oak. Wall construction is Besser sandstone veneer. Both units draw hot water and heating from an oil-fired system. There are many built-ins and shelves. Roof is steel decking with fibreglass insulation.

A common soundproofed hatch in the dividing wall between the two units houses the telephones for both units so either phone can be answered from either unit.

Garden paths, and approaches to the terrace at the rear of the front unit have been ramped instead of stepped between the different levels for easy negotiation by Mr and Mrs Swift.<sup>47</sup>

The published floorplan and photographs of *Beddison/Swift House*, extracted from the AHB article, are reproduced below.

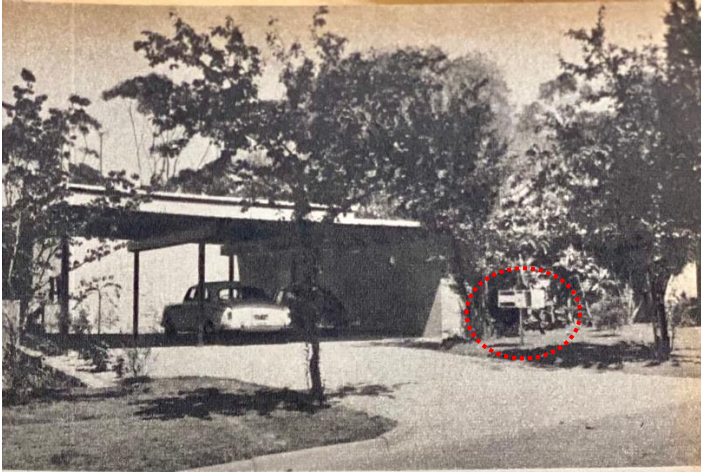


'Entry to the rear unit is through the carport and down steps to a lower level. So the architects designed a small courtyard in the space between the carport and the front wall of the unit.'  
(Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)

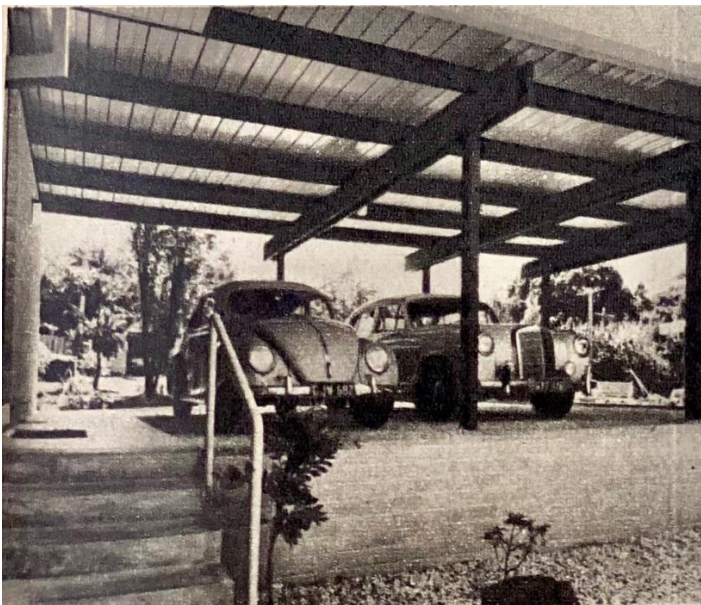
<sup>45</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p38; and Philip Goad, 'A Very Private Practice: The Life and Work of Guilford Bell', in Leon van Schaik, ed, *The life work of Guilford bell, architecture 1912-1992*, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999, p119

<sup>46</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p37; see also

<sup>47</sup> 'Two Families Share View', *Australian Home Beautiful*, April 1965, pp23-4



Photograph of carport and façade of *Beddison/Swift House* from Crown Road  
Note horizontal timber post box, which is extant, is circled  
(Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)

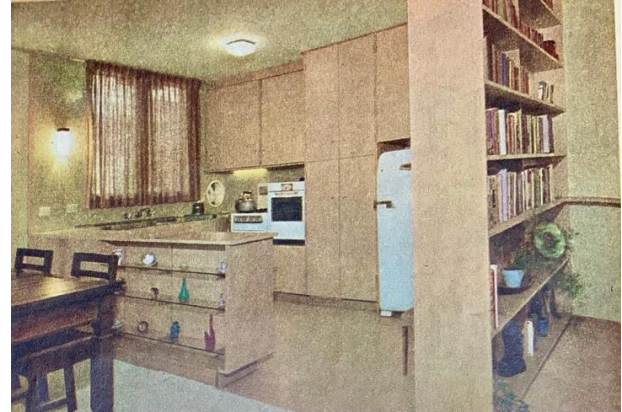


Photograph of internal front courtyard to carport ceiling  
(Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)



Rear frontage of the two-storey unit from back yard  
(Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)





(Above) Photograph of the Swift kitchen  
(Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)

(Left) Photograph of the Beddison living room, looking towards the kitchen (Source: 'Two Families Share View', *AHB*, April 1965, p23)

The modernist enthusiast Peter Wille (1931-71) also photographed *Beddison/Swift House*, presumably during the 1960s.<sup>48</sup>



Beddison/Swift House from Crown Road  
(Source: Peter Wille, SLV, H91/244/1569)

<sup>48</sup>

Wille was employed as a draftsman by the firm Smith, Tracey, Lyon & Block. In his own time, he compiled an extensive record of modernist designs in Melbourne, predominantly in its southeast (he resided in Mount Waverly).





Close-up of the entrance of the two-storey block from the carport  
(Source: Peter Wille, SLV, H91.244/1566)



Rear elevation of the Swift's two-storey block – deck since expanded  
(Source: Peter Wille, SLV, H91/244/1567)



Rear of the Beddison's front unit  
(Source: Peter Wille, SLV, H91/244/1565)



### Neil Clerehan (1922-2017)

'One of Melbourne's great architectural figures', Clerehan emerged as a leader of Australia's modern movement during its heyday over the 1950s/1960s.<sup>49</sup> Through his gregariousness, talent for domestic design, sharp architectural and social commentary, and various other roles in education and advocacy, Clerehan played an influential role in shaping postwar architecture, propagating a new 'modern' vision for living. His body of work has been subject to recent major academic study.<sup>50</sup>

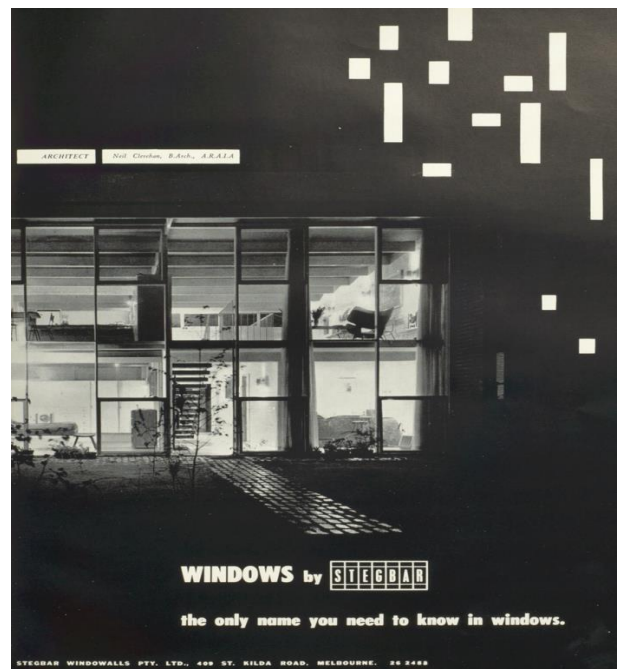
Melbourne born, Clerehan completed his architectural studies at The University of Melbourne in 1950, after war service with the AIF in New Guinea during the Second World War (1942-44). A year before graduating, he commenced solo practice and collaborated with friend Robin Boyd to establish the ground-breaking RVIA Small Homes Service (SHS). Deeply interested in American culture and technology (and "chutzpah"), Clerehan spent 1952 travelling and working in the USA.<sup>51</sup> Upon returning, he resumed designing houses, which remained Clerehan's enduring passion. Through the SHS directorship (succeeding Boyd, between 1953 and 1961), including a weekly column in *The Age*, he cultivated a public profile as a notable architect.<sup>52</sup> In 1955, Clerehan married Sonia Cole, a painter.

After resigning the directorship of the SHS, Clerehan entered into a partnership with another modernist architect, the reserved Guilford Bell (refer to Citation 8, *Purcell House*, for biography). The brief Clerehan & Bell practice (1962-64) produced a small number of important designs, including *Beddison/Swift House*, but creative differences led to an eventual parting of ways.<sup>53</sup>

Clerehan continued to design, whether solo or in partnerships, in a determinedly modernist manner into his 90s.<sup>54</sup> A committed member of the profession, his work was routinely honoured by the fraternity. He was made a Life Fellow of the AIA (1977) and received the President's Prize from the RIA (Victorian Chapter) in 2004. The University of Melbourne bestowed an honorary Doctorate of Architecture upon Clerehan in 2008.<sup>55</sup>



Clerehan (left) and Robin Boyd (right) photographed organising a SHS exhibition, 1953  
(Source: Geoffrey Serle, *Robin Boyd Life*, 1996, p99)



'Stegbar' advertisement, showing Clerehan's first house, slipped into the back end of the book – his work did no feature elsewhere within it (Source: *Best Australian Houses*, F W Chesire, 1961)

<sup>49</sup> Goad, 'Vale Neil Clerehan, 1922-2017', para 1; and Goad, *The Modern House*, Chapter 6, pp61-4

<sup>50</sup> Harriet Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', in Edquist and Richard Black, *The Architecture of Neil Clerehan*, RMIT University Press, 2005

<sup>51</sup> Goad, 'Vale Neil Clerehan', para 12

<sup>52</sup> Philip Goad, 'Clerehan, Neil', in Goad and Julie Willis, eds, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p154

<sup>53</sup> Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p41

<sup>54</sup> Goad, 'Vale Neil Clerehan, 1922-2017', para 3

<sup>55</sup> Philip Goad, 'Clerehan, Neil', p155

## Thematic Context

Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018:

- Theme 5: Suburban development

See also Allom Lovell & Associates, *Banyule Heritage Place Study: An Urban History*, vol 1, July 1999:

- 6.4 Post-War Residential Development

## Comparative Analysis

Two other designs by Bell & Clerehan were constructed in the municipality:

- *Box House*, 2 Glenard Drive, Eaglemont (part of HO1, identified within the precinct as 'significant') – a single-storey dwelling built in the Griffins'-planned 'Glenard Estate' in 1962 and generally accredited to Clerehan. It has an L-shaped plan based around an internal courtyard, a stepped flat-roof, broad overhanging and boxed eaves, and is constructed of concrete bricks. It features a pared-down aesthetic and highlights an integrated carport supported by four slender pipes with a timber batten ceiling, which confers an ultra-modern character. An important instance of the practice's work but now unsympathetically modified, including the rendering of external walls and alterations to fenestration.



*Box House* – before modifications

(Source: Mark Strizic, *Cross-Section*, no 142, August 1964)

- *Purcell House*, 17 Hartlands Road, Ivanhoe (recommended for a HO by this Study) – overseen solely by Bell and also constructed in 1963. It has several design similarities with *Beddison/Swift House* but is better understood in the context of Bell's body of work, encapsulating his studied interest in presenting classicised, composed, minimalistic visuals.

Clerehan does not appear to have been undertaken any individual commissions in Banyule.

An array of architect-designed modernist houses are included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay for Banyule. Most originate in the 1950s and reflect the multiplying version of mid-century modernism. The dominant influence of the International Style is prevalent, particularly its preference for rectangular footprints, cuboid forms and stripped-down aesthetic; for instance, 10 Alexandra Street, Greensborough (HO136) by Moore and Hammond, 1957. Others reveal the period's growing interest in the modular derivation of the plan, with steel or timber framing and lightweight panelling and bands of glazing. A key example of specific geometry is the 1954 *Snelleman House* (HO36 + VHR H2282) in Ivanhoe East by architects Peter and Dione McIntyre, often referred to as the 'Coil House'.



*Beddison/Swift House* is on par with Banyule's other accomplished examples of rationalist/'classical' modernism, distinguished by its ability to illustrate Clerehan's particularly self-effacing design approach and aspiration to reform daily 'living patterns'.

Collectively, these varied examples of modernism provide insight into the forces of modernity that shaped the district following the Second World War, particularly shifting sociocultural and economic factors and the willingness of some residents to interact with then unconventional design culture and novel lifestyle patterns.

## Condition

Good

## Intactness

Largely intact

## Previous Assessment

- RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants, *Banyule Heritage Study 2020: Stage 1 report*, Banyule City Council, August 2020 – High priority, recommend for Stage 2

## Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	Yes (brick walls and timber elements)
Internal Alteration Controls	Yes (timber floorboards, internal walls with timber battens or plastered, open timber stair)
Tree Controls	Yes (Lemon-scented gum in courtyard and front garden + likely Prickly-leaved Paperback in front garden)
Outbuildings and/or fences	No

## Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay is outlined approximately below.



Recommended extent of heritage overlay  
(Source: Nearmap, November 2020)