PURCELL HOUSE

Address	17 Hartlands Road, Ivanhoe East
Significance	Local
Construction Date	1963
Period	Late 20th century
Date Inspected	January 2021

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

Purcell House at 17 Hartlands Road, Ivanhoe is significant to the City of Banyule. It was designed as a family home for Noel Brian Purcell and Margaret Therese Purcell in 1962 by Guilford Bell, then in partnership with Neil Clerehan (Bell & Clerehan). The house, carport and eastern boundary wall were constructed in 1963. At this time, Gordon Ford designed and laid out the front garden. Bell later designed the rear courtyard, including pool and changeroom, and east elevation canopy above the entrance when in solo practice in 1971.

The elements of significance are the H-shaped plan, the west-facing internal courtyard, flat roof and steel decking cladding, boxed eaves, timber-lined soffit, brick chimney, skylights, box gutters and concealed downpipes, walls of unpainted Monier Besser concrete blocks, timber pergola, all timber-framed external openings (sliding doors, fixed glazing), entrance door and cantilevered canopy, white painted/vine-covered brick wall to the east perimeter, and rear carport.

The original layout is generally significant, as are some internal finishes and elements – specifically mountain ash ceilings and walls of exposed concrete blocks or vertically laid timber boarding, and a coverable fireplace in the living room.

Also significant is the layout of the bush style front garden – namely, the arrangement of lawn, front and side boundary plantings, rockery situated forward of the dwelling's façade, and side-situated gravelled driveway. Some specific landscape elements are significant, particularly individual or grouped weathered boulders and the Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculata*), flanked by Lemon-

scented gums (*Corymbia citriodora*) situated to the front boundary. The pair of Lemon-scented gums to the west boundary of the front garden are contributory to the setting.

The rear courtyard, including swimming pool, paving, enclosing timber screen, and change room, are complementary to *Purcell House*.

Changes instigated by designers other than Bell are not significant, including contemporary additions to the 1971 changeroom at the rear of the site.

How is it Significant?

Purcell House is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Banyule.

Why is it Significant?

Purcell House is of historical significance as a noteworthy residential design by the architect Guilford Bell, the elusive, pre-eminent practitioner of an urbane 'classical' modernism over the second half of the 20th century in Australia. While the commission of the clients, Noel and Margaret Purcell, for a family home was modest, the precisely resolved design that Bell produced was important in the arc of his career – showcasing Bell's then-ongoing commitment to domestic privacy, anonymous street frontages and repose. With its courtyards, bespoke landscaping, double carport, and the later addition of a swimming pool, the well-appointed house reflects the relative prosperity of the 1960s and the new lifestyle possibilities enabled by engagement with avant-garde design. At a broader scale, *Purcell House* is illustrative of the consolidation of Ivanhoe East over the 1960s as a focal point for the modern architecture in the municipality. (Criterion A)

Purcell House is of aesthetic significance as a remarkably intact and cohesive embodiment of the personalised design approach of the designer, Guilford Bell. Its elegant visual and rigidly formal plan demonstrate his distinctive integration of classical principles with a minimalist/modern sensibility, the visual outcome of which situated Bell well outside mainstream modernism in the early 1960s (and subsequently). An array of unusual attributes – the monumental character of the house, its sense of retreat and employment of a perimeter wall and courtyards – signal Bell's atypical source material, particularly his passion for traditional Middle Eastern architecture; while the classicised symmetry and restrained material palette of *Purcell House* also hint at colonial and neo-Georgian interests in purity and decorum. Geometric walls provide a backdrop for the bold bush-style garden and the interplay of line and plane. The considered interior illuminates Bell's belief in total design and the importance of refined spatial composition. The employment of modular dimensions for all openings at *Purcell House* is also quintessential Bell, fusing the indoors and outdoors. *Purcell House* is the only instance of Bell's essentially solo work in the municipality and, in any context, evocative of his *parti*. (Criterion E)

Description

Purcell House is a single-storey building situated approximately at the centre of its elongated and deep rectangular allotment, which slopes markedly east-to-west. In combination, its sizable setback and the screening role played by existing vegetation obscures views to the residence from the public realm. Such 'hiding' of the residence from the street was an intentional facet of Guilford Bell's original design. Accordingly, this description is partially based on contemporary and historic photographs and original architectural drawings.[1]

The house, constructed in 1963, has a H-shaped plan composed of two parallel and slim wings arranged around a west-facing courtyard.[2] Another courtyard, also designed by Bell, was provided to the rear of the *Purcell House* in 1971.[3] Internally, the three wings feature discrete zoning, with the front containing dining and loungeroom, the middle the kitchen and family, and the rear bedrooms. Bell had experimented with the 'H-shaped courtyard typology' over the late 1950s on the Mornington Peninsula, that stemmed from his profound interest in ancient Middle Eastern architecture. In the wake of *Purcell House*, it became increasingly central to Bell's approach. He viewed the H-shaped plan as advantageous, particularly for suburban and urban contexts,

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1   '17 Hartlands Road, Ivanhoe East', *realestateview*, September 2005, www.realestateview.com.au/real-estate/17-hartlands-road-ivanhoe-east-vic/property-details-sold-residential-630117/; and various drawings, *Purcell House, Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111

2   Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Pty Ltd Architects, 'House at Lot 187 Hartlands Road East Ivanhoe, for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell + 'New Carport', October 1963, drawing nos 1 and 2 – *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111

3   Guilford Bell, 'Additions to House at 17 Hartlands Road, East Ivanhoe for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', drawing nos 1 and 2, October 1971 – *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111

enabling a high degree of concealment/privacy while also facilitating view framing, including from within the dwelling (allowing surrounding landscaping – via slot openings – to become an internal decorative element).[4]
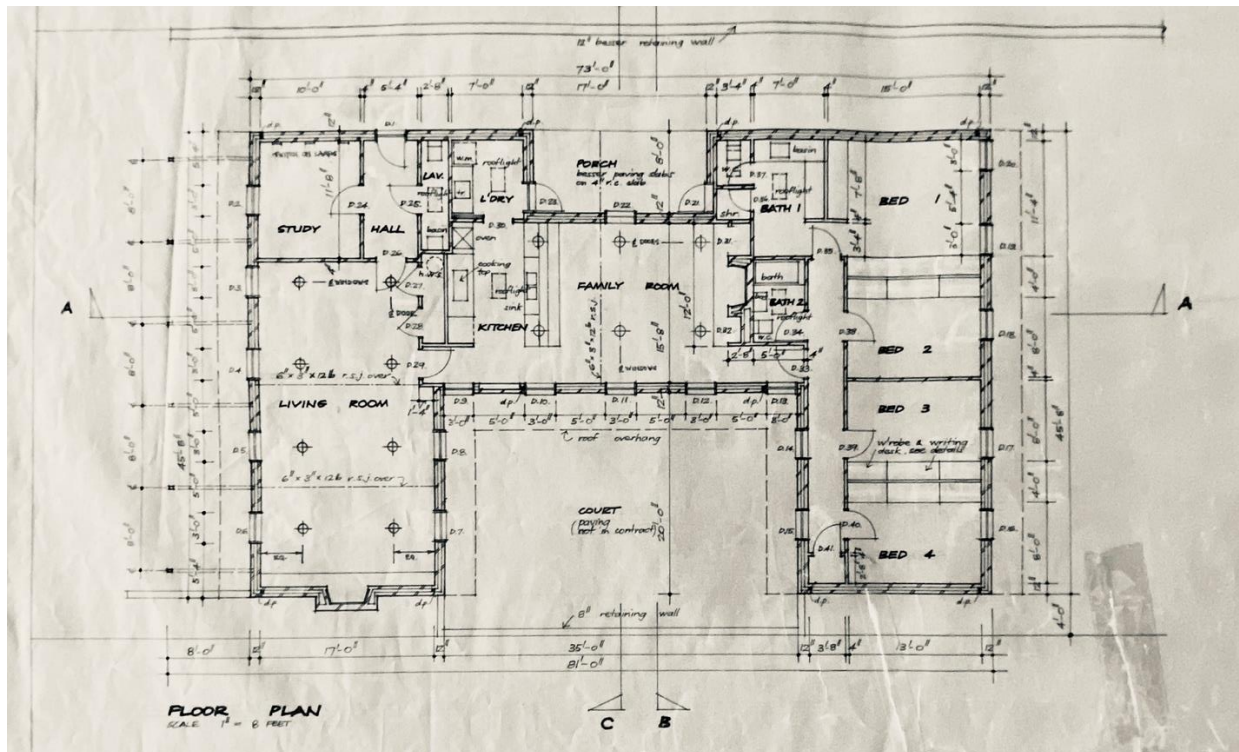
Original (1962) floorplan of *Purcell House* – north (Hartlands Road) is left of frame
(Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Pty Ltd Architects, 'House at Lot 187 Hartlands Road, East Ivanhoe, for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', Working Drawings, October 1962, Drawing 1 – *Purcell House*, *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111)

At *Purcell House*, horizontality is stressed in the form of the three connected wings; a Wrightian gesture pronounced in Bell's work over the 1950s. However, unlike Wright's preference for dynamic asymmetry, Bell pursued fixed planes that emphasised balance and regularity.

Purcell House has a flat roof, clad in 'Brownbuilt' steel decking, which appears to remain. Eaves to the front (north), courtyard and east elevation are wide and boxed with timber-lined soffits. Six original compact skylights are evident to the roof of the middle wing, corresponding with internal service rooms. There is a squat and geometric brick chimney to the front part of the west elevation. Box gutters connected to downpipes concealed in the walls are present to the side elevations.

The building is constructed of unpainted Monier Besser concrete blocks (light-sandstone colour) in stretcher bond on a reinforced concrete slab. The internal floor is flat throughout.

The north elevation, facing the street, is defined by six slender, evenly placed Oregon timber posts that project at right angles over a paved deck.

In 1993, the westernmost beam was infilled with horizontal timber slats as a privacy measure following the development of the neighbouring allotment.[5]

An integral component of *Purcell House* and hallmark of Bell's approach is the embracement of modular fenestration. Every opening at the design shares the same dimensions – that of a thin, timber-framed (Jarrah sills) floor-to-ceiling window or door

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[4]   Anne T Pettus and Garth Paterson, 'Guilford Bell's Landscapes: Controlled Nature' in Leon van Schaik, ed, *The life work of Guilford bell, architecture 1912-1992*, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999, p153

[5]   This alteration was designed in the wake of Bell's death and undertaken by his professional partner, Graham Fisher. (Guildford Bell & Graham Fisher Architects, 'New Timber Screen & Fence at 17 Hartlands Road east Ivanhoe for Mr & Mrs Purcell, drawing no A1a, June 1993, *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111)

('windows that were doors and never windows').[6] These openings are either fixed or operate as a sliding door. These openings are arranged symmetrically to front, rear and internal courtyard walls.

Close-up of north elevaton, circa 2005
(Source: National Trust of Australia (VIC), *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351)

The east elevation is treated differently and is only punctured by three doors. A small cantilevered ('hovering') canopy to the front portion of the east elevation, added by Bell in 1971, marks the main entrance.[7] Its door, original of solid timber, was later replaced with a glazed door to allow light penetration in the hallway.[8] Back from the entrance/canopy is a recessed patio, including a sliding door to the laundry and family room.

Opposite the east elevation is a three-metre-high brick perimeter wall, painted white and covered in *Ficus pumila* (climbing fig), an original design component required for privacy from the adjacent property. It extends slightly forward of the building line and continues through a gate towards the rear double carport. The latter was designed during October 1963, probably as a late-stage addition during construction of the primary dwelling. The carport – which is not visible from street – was drawn as a lightweight beam and post structure with a skillion roof. The twelve posts were identified as 'Redgum'.[9]

The internal courtyard is surfaced in concrete pavers and edged with garden beds. A timber screen and trellis – provided by Fisher in 1993 – runs its western boundary.

The three bedrooms of the south (rear) elevation face and open out onto a second paved courtyard that features a lengthwise and rectangular swimming pool. The latter element, designed by Bell as part of his 1971 modifications, is situated nearly in line with the house's western side and separated from the driveway and rear of the property by a high timber screen of horizontal timber slats. As part of this new work, he also attached a small change room to the west side of the carport situated in the southeast corner of the property. The former appears to have been enlarged later (not by Bell).

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6   Bell disliked conventional windows to such an extent that he includes none in his post-1960 houses. (Philip Goad, 'Bell, Guilford', in
         Goad and Julie Willis, *The Encyclopedia of Australian* Architecture, Cambridge University, 2012, p77)
7   Bell, 'Additions to House at 17 Hartlands Road, East Ivanhoe for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell'
8   Pettus and Paterson, 'Guilford Bell's Landscapes: Controlled Nature', p151
9   Bell & Clerehan, 'House at Lot 187 Hartlands Road, East Ivanhoe, For Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', October 1963, 'New Carport' –
         Purcell House, *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111

South (rear) elevation, circa 2005
(Source: National Trust of Australia (VIC), *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351)

Bell's internal planning appears to remain essentially unchanged at *Purcell House*. He typically shied away from the open plan, preferring the spatial/circulatory experiences brought about by discrete zoning, entrance halls ('ritualised entry'), corridors, and closed doors, an approach reflected in *Purcell House*.

The existing meticulous and minimalistic finishes and detailing of the house were key to Bell's design philosophy. The main internal elements include the employment of mountain ash for ceilings, joinery/cabinetry, and vertically laid boarding to the interior of the west wall of the bridging wing. Most internal walls were of exposed concrete blocks. In 'wet areas' white mosaic tiles were utilised. Original floorboards in the front and rear wings likely remain but have been carpeted. The pavers (geometric pattern) in the kitchen and family room are also original. White laminate was used for kitchen and bathroom surfaces (unclear if surviving).

Built-in furniture – the height of fashion in the early 1960s – at *Purcell House* include fitted cupboards, shelves, benches, study desks and wardrobes, most with elegant brass handles and pins. These were all designed by Bell. Other elements, such as concealed toilet cisterns/lighting and coverable fireplace (living room), testify to Bell's desire to hide service aspects wherever possible.

Bell was in his early fifties when he designed *Purcell House*, maturing as a designer of highly resolved discrete houses, but at the tail end of a productive but challenging partnership with Neil Clerehan.[10] Visible then at the subject building is the main architectural concepts (*partis*) that Bell went on to re-interpret/perfect over his long career. These range from the continuation of the H-plan/courtyards to an interest in creating 'bastions of privacy',[11] accomplished in this instance by a deep setback and screening vegetation (unlike at other designs, where Bell often utilised blank walls set straight to the street). Recognisable also is Bell's highly considered manipulation of 'open' and 'closed' spaces – the interplay of full-length slot glimpse/views to the encompassing landscaping – and commitment to 'total design'. In Bell's mind, the orchestration of the latter was the only means of cultivating the sublime/serene living experiences he sought to provide for clients.[12]

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[10]   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, p115

[11]   Goad, 'Bell, Guilford', p77

[12]   Allan Powell, 'Guilford Bell: The Sensibility', in Leon van Schaik, ed, *The life work of Guilford bell, architecture 1912-1992*, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999, p88

Living room, c2005 – fireplace is identifed by the red arrow
(Source: National Trust of Australia (VIC), *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351)

Kitchen and family room, c2005 – laminate surface in foreground
(Source: National Trust of Australia (VIC), *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351)
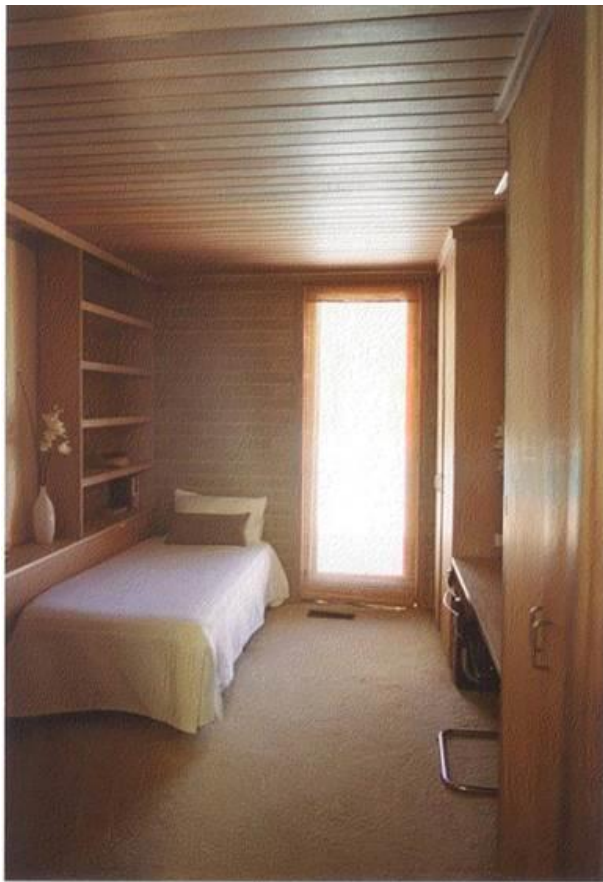
Bedroom 4, circa 2005
(Source: National Trust of Australia (VIC), *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351)

Underlying such personalised design principles was Bell's idiosyncratic melding of classical principles with tenets of the modern movement, an aesthetic that placed him beyond the main currents of postwar and late 20th-century modernism.[13] His work was further distinguished by his view that the accomplishment of visual beauty was of overriding importance. Such practises and objectives made his designs 'somewhat alien in their reserve',[14] and earned him the epithet (sometimes dismissive) of Melbourne's 'supreme architect of manners' during the 1960s and 1970s.[15] Bell's characterisation of this individualised design mode is telling:

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13   Goad, 'A Very Private Practice: The Life and Work of Guilford Bell', pp130-1
14   Goad, 'A Very Private Practice: The Life and Work of Guilford Bell', p113
15   Philip James Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945 – 1975*, PhD Thesis, Department of Architecture and Building University of Melbourne, September 1992, chapter 6, p64

I aim to create architecture that is humanist, in that it recognises the fundamental importance of man; Classical, in that it recognises his need for order; essentially functional. It seeks to provide environments in which the person is always the predominant feature in climates of severity, designed to enhance and encourage self awareness.[16]

Bell drew from an array of source material, including an abiding interest in traditional Middle Eastern and Japanese architecture and, subtly articulated, colonial and neo-Georgian notions of order and repose.[17] Often cited is Frank Lloyd Wright's site responsiveness and tightly controlled entry sequences, the refined minimalism of Mies van Rohe and Philip Johnson, and sculptured freestanding composure of the Mexican modernist Luis Barragan. Domestically, the interest of (Sir) Roy Ground – who Bell, atypically, considered a colleague – in reserved and tranquil exteriors may also be evident.[18]

The front garden was designed and constructed by Gordon Ford in the native/bush style in which he was an early advocate and innovator. Ford's landscape approach, the crafting of a naturalistic setting (albeit artificial in this case), was central to the *Purcell House's* carefully honed sense of place. Bell routinely embraced native/indigenous planting as complements to his modern houses and employed them in a 'screening' manner.[19]

The general ethos and format of Ford's front garden design remain interpretable. Original landscape elements include the lawn area and mature trees, particularly the Spotted Gum (*Corymbia maculate*) flanked by Lemon-scented gums (*Corymbia citriodora*) situated to the front boundary and the rockery of weathered boulders situated in front of the façade, which accommodates various shrubs, grasses, and small trees, and side garden beds. There are also two Lemon-scented gums planted to the west boundary. The eastern gravelled driveway is another prominent feature. The small timber letterbox is also likely original. Side timber paling fences are likely later additions.

View to front garden, facing south west – right of the drive way is the Lemon-scented gum and Spotted Gum

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16   Attributed to Bell in Bill MacMahon, ed, *The Architecture of East Australia*, Axel Menges, 2001, p70
17   Goad, *Modern Melbourne*, chapter 6, pp72-3
18   Conrad Hamann, 'In Stillness at the Centre: Guilford Bell's Two Mainstreams', in Leon van Schaik, ed, *The life work of Guilford bell, architecture 1912-1992*, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999, p40
19   Pettus and Paterson, 'Guilford Bell's Landscapes: Controlled Nature', p154

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.[20] 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 (est. 1835) downstream of the *Birrarung*/Yarra at Melbourne.[21] 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.[22]

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.[23] 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.[24] This perceived rural idyll enticed *plein air* artists to the district during the 1880s, fixing the 'Heidelberg School' within Australia's artistic consciousness.[25]

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.[26] 'Picturesque' terrain, varied outlooks and the high repute of the broader district drew often well-off newcomers. By the turn of the century, 'Beautiful Ivanhoe' was routinely portrayed as a 'fashionable', 'exclusive locality' of 'model homes'.[27] 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.[28]

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.[29] 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 and generally moneyed proprietors sought the services of an architect.[30] 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)

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20   Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, October 2018, pp15-20, available online
21   James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne & The Conquest of Australia,* Black Inc., 2011, pxi
22   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 reformatted into a Road District (1860), Shire (1871) and then City (1934). It was amalgamated as the City of Banyule in 1994.
23   Donald S Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People 1838-1900*, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p13
24   Robert P Whitworth, *Bailliere's Victorian Gazetteer*, F F Bailliere, 1879, pp237
25   Context, *Banyule Thematic Environmental History*, sections 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.5, and 2.3.10; and Janine Rizzetti, 'Heidelberg', in Richard Broome et al, eds., *Remembering Melbourne 1850-1960*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 2016, p282
26   Thom's estate designation was inspired by a novel of the same name by Sir Walter Scott (1819).
27   Ivanhoe & Alphington Progress Society, *Beautiful Ivanhoe: the suburb of model homes and scenic charm*, Model Studio, 1900, SLV
28   Ivanhoe Station opened in 1888; however, inefficiencies in the Heidelberg-Melbourne railway line initially bedevilled growth.
29   Ivanhoe grew from roughly 2,000 residents in 1913 to nearly 8,000 by 1933 (*Victorian Year Books*, Australian Bureau of Statistics).
30   Don Garden, 'Ivanhoe', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, July 2008

Site-specific

The subject land derives from Portion 2 of the Parish of Keelbundora, a roughly 420-hectare holding purchased (along with portions 1 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 to enormous profit.[31]

A 126-hectare property, acquired by Captain Sylvester John Brown (the original spelling was 'Brown', the 'e' was added later by his son, the famed novelist 'Rolfe Boldrewood') and named 'Hartlands' incorporated the subject property. Brown, a onetime shipmaster in the East India Company, who had made a small fortune in Sydney in whaling and trade, set up Hartlands as his familial seat around 1840. From a commodious weatherboard homestead overlooking the *Birrung*/Yarra, the Browns cultivated the flats and socialised with Heidelberg's gentry.[32]

The idyll was brief. Worsening economic conditions forced the foreclosure of Hartlands – the stress of which shattered Brown Snr. However, a fortunate marriage between his daughter and a relative of Walker (still the mortgage holder) enabled the clearing of the debt through a partial sale of the estate in 1853, and the 'Brownes of Hartlands' returned.[33] They remained in occupation until the mid-1860s, departing after their residence was destroyed by arson.[34] Hartlands was leased for farming until the mid-1880s, when it was offered for sale as one lot:

> It is admirably adapted to subdivisional purposes, the position being unequalled in the district, which is undoubtedly the most charming and picturesque suburb around Melbourne. It is only seven miles from the MELBOURNE POST-OFFICE. Tenders for the completion of the railway from Alphington to Heidelberg are shortly to be called for, and when the line is completed the value of the land in this delightful locality must necessarily increase enormously. The views to be obtained from this noble estate are TRULY MAGNIFICENT, and must be seen to be appreciated.[35]

The chief buyer was the Trustees, Executors, and Agency Company (TEA), acquiring roughly 65 hectares of Hartlands in 1889.[36] This holding stretched southeast from Lower Heidelberg Road to The Boulevard, bounded by Warncliffe Road in the west. The arrival of bleaker economic conditions in the early 1890s saw little sales activity at the estate, which continued to accommodate agricultural uses, including a horse stud in the early 1900s.[37] In 1916, the renowned viticulturist, François Robert de Castella, then in residence at *Chartersville* (HO15 + VHR H1140), became a joint proprietor with TEA.[38] His presence triggered the progressive subdivision of much of the locality that became known as Ivanhoe East over the postwar period.

The south side of Hartlands Road (established as part of the TEA/de Castella subdivision) comprised one of the later releases sold in the 1940s and 1950s.[39] The subject allotment (no 187) was transferred in 1944 to George T Fillmore, a storeman from Parkville, and passed undeveloped through multiple hands. In June 1961, it was acquired by a solicitor, Noel Brian Purcell (1933-2021) and his wife Margaret Therese Purcell, then nearby residents of a conventional hipped roof cream-brick residence at 3 Withers Street.[40]

In the early 1960s, Philip Purcell approached Neil Clerehan, the well-known recently departed director of the RVIA Small Homes Service seeking an introduction to Guilford Bell, whose work he had become familiar with through design publications (possibly the *Simon House* in Mount Eliza). Whether Purcell knew or not, Clerehan was in an architectural partnership with Bell, so an introduction was readily arranged, followed by a commission for Bell & Clerehan to prepare a modest, cost-effective family home at the Purcell's Hartlands Road property.[41]

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31   W Joy, 'Walker, Thomas (1804-1886)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1967, available online

32   Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and its People*, pp31-2

33   Garden, *Heidelberg: The Land and Its People*, pp41-2

34   'Incendiarism', *Australasian*, 15 April 1865, p6

35   'Advertising', *Argus*, 20 February 1886, p2

36   TEA (1879-1983) was Australia's first trustee company. (Certificate of Title, vol 2142, folio 233)

37   'The Champion Trotting Stallion Almont', *Leader*, 5 September 1903, p16

38   Certificate of Title, vol 2142, folio 233

39   TEA and de Castella were registered as the joint proprietors of the irregular holding (lots 140 to 191) bound by Hartlands Road (north), Burke Road North (east), McArthur Road (south/west) in September 1940. (Certificate of Title, vol 6413, folio 567)

40   Certificate of Title, vol 8087, folio 522 – Noel's parents Philip and Caroline Purcell had acquired the allotment in June 1955 before selling it two years later. ('Noel Brian Purcell', *Age*, 13 February 2021)

41   National Trust of Australia (Victoria) [NT], *Classification Report: Purcell House*, B7 351 – this information appears to stem from an interview with Noel Purcell

The Bell & Clerehan partnership had formed in 1962, something of a forced union due to the 'credit squeeze' of the previous year. Architectural historian Harriet Edquist describes their short-lived office as operating 'more or less as two identifiable practices', responsible for about twelve houses.[42] 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'.[43]

1954 aerial photograph
Showing undeveloped and seemingly treeless subject allotment (outlined in dashed red)
(Source: Landata, Project no 174, Run 15, Frame 75)

In line with this assessment, Purcell's interactions with the practice appear to have been predominantly with Bell, who was the primary (if not only) designer of the resulting *Purcell House*. Both architect and client characterised the process and their 'rapport' as harmonious.[44] Imaginably, though, such concord rested on the Purcells – like many of Bell's clients – being prepared to follow his design direction.[45]

The design of *Purcell House* was resolved over 1962. Bell initially proposed a square form for the residence, punctured by a central courtyard; however, it was deemed too small in light of the Purcell's growing family. By October, the extant H-shaped plan had been drawn up.[46] As was to become customary for Bell, his design reach was total, even extending to specifying the selection of furniture (dining and coffee table, upholstered seating in lounge and 'Danish' dining chairs).[47]

Construction of *Purcell House* occurred over 1962. The Purcell family remained in occupation until late 2005.[48]

Bell nearly always prepared his own landscape plans and strategy, placing great emphasis on harmonising site and design. However, in tackling *Purcell House*'s decidedly suburban context – a rarity for Bell – he sought outside expertise. Gordon Ford (1918-99), a local of Eltham, then in the vanguard of the bush/native style garden movement, was engaged to design and construct the front garden.[49]

While *Purcell House* coalesced in a sensitive professional context – the fraying of the Bell/Clerehan collaboration – the design proved influential for Bell. Its classicised yet clear modern aesthetic was an expression Bell pursued doggedly moving forward.

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42   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
43   Edquist, 'Neil Clerehan: A Melbourne Practice', p37; see also
44   NT, *Classification Report: Purcell House*
45   Goad, 'A Very Private Practice', p122
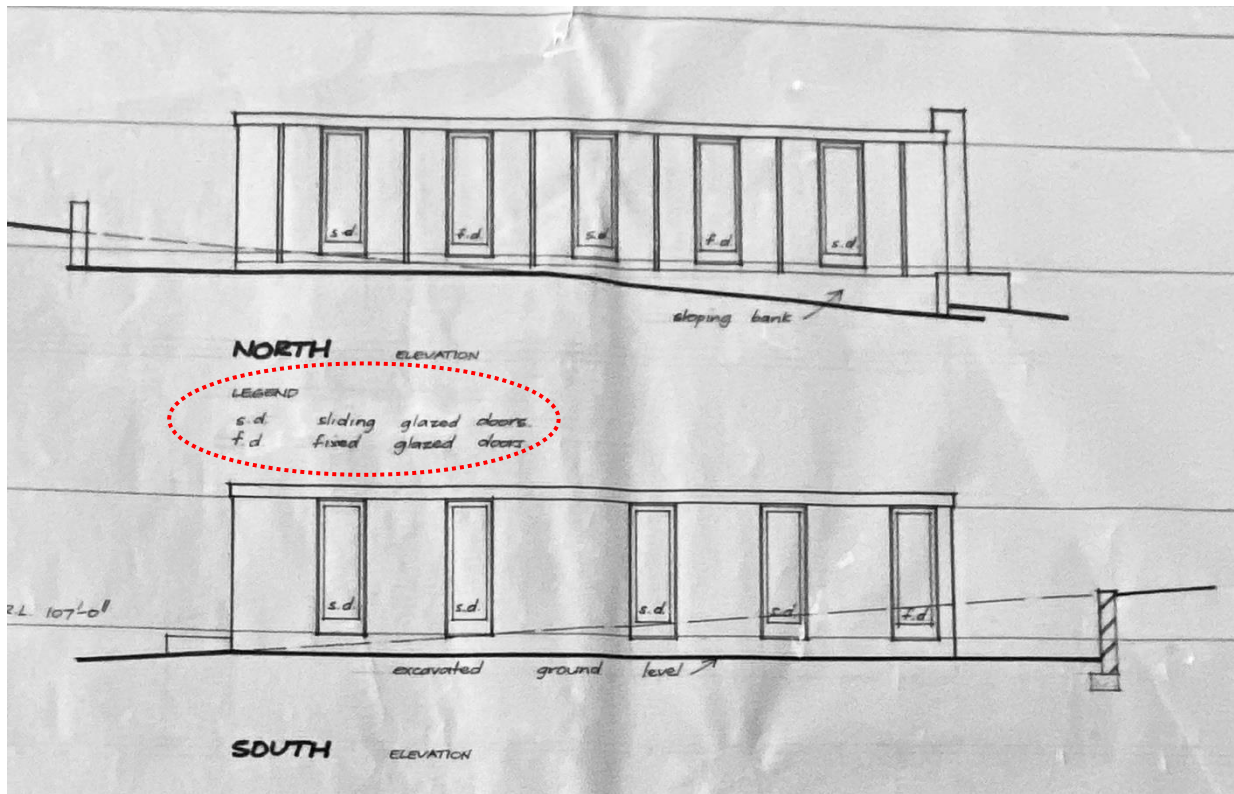46   NT, *Classification Report: Purcell House*
47   NT, *Classification Report: Purcell House*
48   NT, *Classification Report: Purcell House*
49   Pettus and Paterson, 'Guilford Bell's Landscapes: Controlled Nature', p154

His later architectural partner, Graham Fisher, recalled Bell's lasting personal satisfaction with the design.[50]

Extract from Working Drawings for *Purcell House*, dated October 1962
Showing front (north) and rear (south) elevations
(Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, 'House at Lot 187 Hartlands Road East Ivanhoe, for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', Drawing no 1
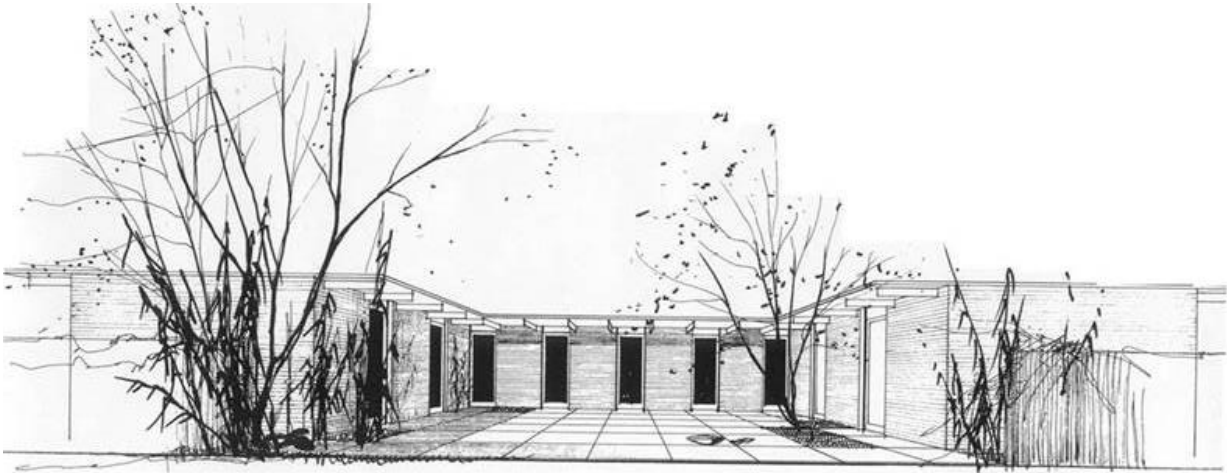– *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111)
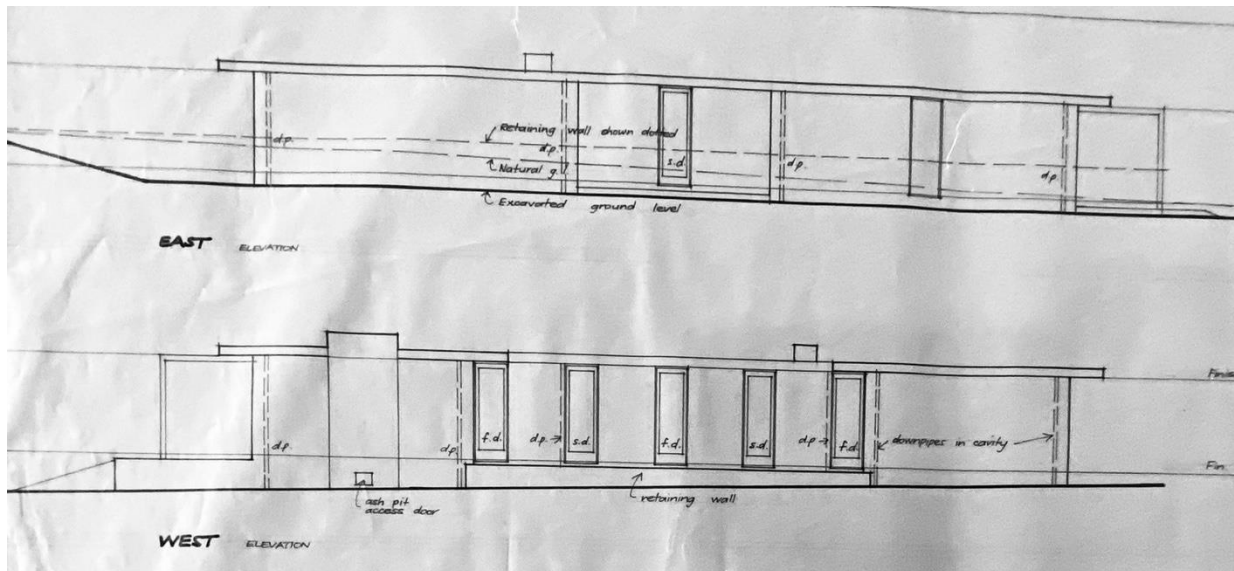
Extract from Working Drawings for *Purcell House*, dated October 1962
Showing east and west elevations
(Source: Guilford Bell & Neil Clerehan Architects, 'House at Lot 187 Hartlands Road East Ivanhoe, for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', Drawing no 1
– *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111)

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[50] NT, *Classification Report: Purcell House*

Purcell House, sketch of courtyard
(Source: *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111)

Such an architect's rendering of contemporary living, like *Purcell House*, was a far departure from the majority of residential construction occurring in Melbourne at the time. A reality touched on by the highbrow Robin Boyd, writing in the early 1960s, when he dismissed the prevalence of 'commonplace workday design':

> We must remember that more than the half the buildings under construction today have not been favoured with the attention of a professional architect. Moreover, about half of what remains has been designed in a rather casual way by architects who are no better than they ought to be. Thus most buildings follow some routine pattern or are based loosely on a magazine illustration presented by a determined client … The small proportion that remains may be called serious architecture …[51]

Purcell House does not appear to have drawn any published contemporary commentary. However, it did attract the lens of Peter Wille (1931-71), a 'modern' enthusiast who traversed Melbourne photographing – in his view – notable examples of the modern movement.[52]


Purcell House – north elevation from front lawn, showing rockery
(Source: Peter Wille, 1960s, SLV, H91.244/4290)

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[51]   Robin Boyd, *The new architecture*, Longmans, 1963, pp3-4
[52]   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).

In 1971, Bell – then in solo practice – designed a swimming pool and changing facilities for the rear of the property. The pool, initially proposed to be arranged horizontally across the site, was ultimately installed lengthwise.[53]
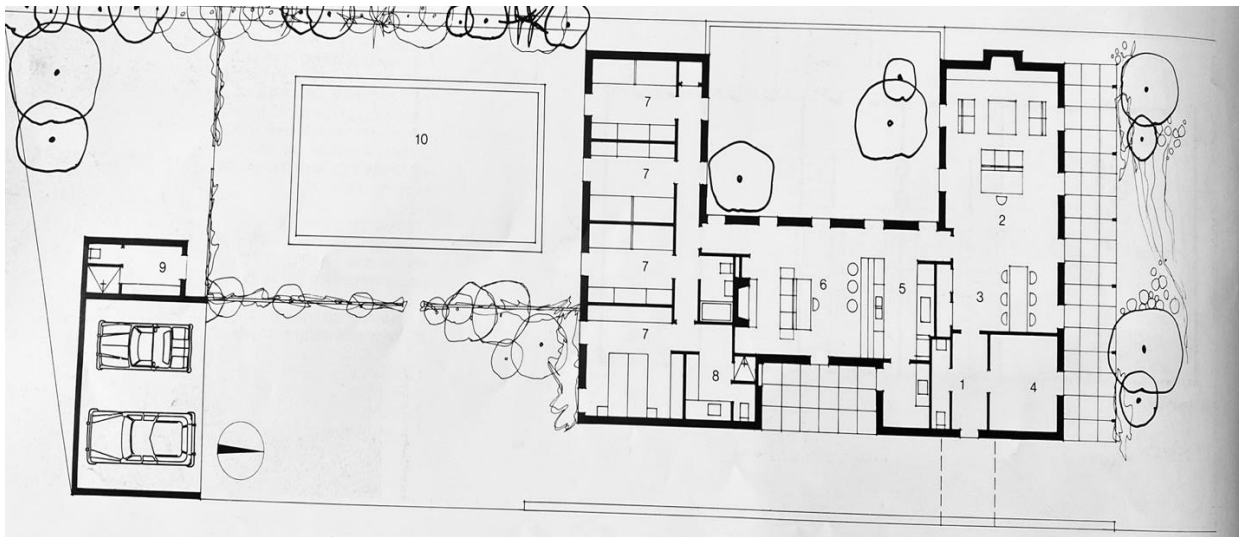
Purcell House plan by early 1980s, following the Bell-designed addition of a pool and changeroom
'1 Hall, 2 Living, 3 Dining, 4 Study, 5 Kitchen, 6 Family, 7 Bedroom, 8 Dressing, 9 Change, 10 Swimming pool'
(Source: Bell, *1952-1980 Architecture of Guilford Bell*, 1982, p30)

Purcell House was one of the designs highlighted by Bell in his book, *1952-1980 Architecture of Guilford Bell* (1982):

This was designed as a family house, arranged so that it is possible for family life to proceed uninterrupted when visitors are being entertained. This was achieved by placing the kitchen and large family room between the living-dining wing and the bedroom wing. All bedrooms look onto a swimming pool in an enclosed garden. The building of 240 square metres is of unpainted beige-coloured concrete blocks. Floors are reinforced concrete and the flat roof is steel deck. The house is set well back from the street and the front is screened by native trees and plants.[54]

Façade (Source: Bell, *1952-1980 Architecture of Guilford Bell*, 1982, p30)

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[53]   Guilford Bell, 'Additions to House at 17 Hartlands Road, East Ivanhoe for Mr & Mrs Noel Purcell', drawing nos 1 and 2, October 1971 – *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111
[54]   Guilford Bell (and Joseph Burke), *1952-1980 Architecture of Guildford Bell*, Proteus Publishing, 1982, p30

Living room
(Source: Bell, *1952-1980 Architecture of Guilford Bell*, 1982, p30)

Shortly after Bell's death, in 1993, his partner Graham Fisher – who continued the office – designed a timber screen for the west side of the courtyard and pergola, enclosing it in response to contemporary development on the adjacent block (no 19).[55]

Guilford Marsh Bell (1912-92)

[*He*] never sought professional acclamation. He had little contact with his peers or the organised profession. He was virtually unknown to the younger generation of architects although his classical, symmetrical buildings struck a chord with the reawakening interest in Neo-Classicism in the 1980s. Like so many long term artists he had the mixed blessing of being re-evaluated later in his career by a new generation with new values.[56]

Compared to many of his peers, Bell's enigmatic life and body of work have been subject to a relatively high degree of study and review.[57] The collective portrayal, as put by Norman Day, is of 'no ordinary architect'.[58] The up-market and mainly domestic body of work produced by Bell over the late 20th century, which traversed the eastern seaboard of Australia, from foreshore to dry plains, is generally considered singular in its design mode; the individual cannon of one of the nation's 'longest practising, most uncompromising hard-edge modernists.'[59]

Born into a patrician pastoral family in the southern tablelands of Queensland, Bell's formative life was privileged.[60] He boarded at The King's School in Sydney and was later articled to the Brisbane architect Lange L Powell. After gaining his diploma in architecture from the Brisbane Central Technical College (1935), Bell spent an influential decade in England, studying at London University and working under the strict neo-classicist (Sir) Albert E Richardson – gaining an appreciation for order, symmetry and

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55   Guildford Bell & Graham Fisher Architects, 'New Timber Screen & Fence at 17 Hartlands Road east Ivanhoe for Mr & Mrs Purcell, drawing no A1a, June 1993, *Collection of architectural drawings by Guilford Bell*, SLV, YLTAD 111

56   Neil Clerehan, 'Guilford Marsh Bell, OBE, FRAIA, 1912-1992', *Transition*, vol 38, 1992, p245

57   Bell, *1952-1980 architecture of Guilford Bell*; Philip James Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945 – 1975*, PhD Thesis, Department of Architecture and Building University of Melbourne, September 1992; Leon van Schaik, ed, *The life work of Guilford bell, architecture 1912-1992*, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999; Goad, 'Bell, Guilford', in Goad and Willis, *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*; and Goad, 'Bell, Guilford Marsh (1912-1992)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2020, available online

58   Norman Day, 'Guilford Bell — cover to cover', *Age*, 5 October 1982, p24

59   Clerehan, 'Guilford Marsh Bell …', p246

60   Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945 – 1975*, chapter 6, p64,

meticulous detailing, but largely rejecting his teacher's historicism.[61] Bell also accompanied two archaeological expeditions to Syria (1938) with Sir Max Mallowan - the husband of the English crime write (Dame) Agatha Christie (his first commission was the renovation of their Georgian house in Devon, 1938) – establishing a lifelong interest in vernacular and ancient Middle Eastern architecture. While in England, Bell passed the examination of the prestigious Royal Institute of British Architects (1939). Returning to Australia at the outbreak of the Second World War, Bell enlisted in the RAAF in 1943 and was employed as an architect in Darwin and works officer in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia).

On discharge in 1946, Bell reconnected with a former employer (from briefly before the war), Ansett Transport Industries, overseeing the design and construction of a tourist resort at Hayman Island on the Great Barrier Reef (1949-52). Such an opportunity, rare in the austerity conditions of postwar Australia, exposed Bell to a base of cosmopolitan and wealthy potential clients. He set up a solo practice in Melbourne in 1952, commencing an unwavering commitment to the production of discrete and urbane houses or spreading but balanced homesteads.[62] A striking exception was the boldly symmetrical five-storey Feltex House (1957-59, since demolished). He continued to design until his death, either independently or in partnership (Bell & Clerehan, 1961-64 and Guilford Bell and Graham Fisher Architects, 1983-92, ongoing as Bell Fisher Architects).

In the late 1950s, Bell met his life partner, Denis Kelynack. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1962 and awarded an Order of the British Empire in 1982. From the mid-1960s, Bell had purposefully withdrawn from professional view. His reluctance to engage with architecture circles and discourses, combined with a 'blue-chip' clientele, conferred a quality of elusiveness, even mystical quality, upon Bell's person and work, but also curtailed any broader influence on public attitudes towards design.[63]
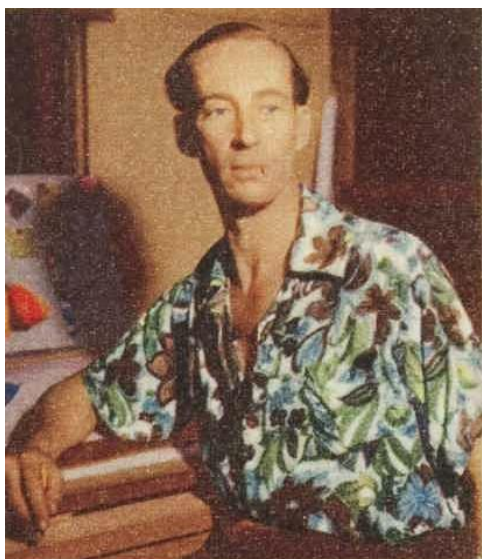
Guilford Bell, photographed in late thirties on the Hayman Island
(Source: *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 7 October 1950, p38)

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:

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61   Joseph Burke, in his forward to *1952-1980 architecture of Guilford Bell* described Bell, 'He has a profound love of the classical. A classical artist seeks to attain an impersonal style of perfection and total order. At the same time he retains a personal style or character of his own' (p11).

62   Bell's signature residences include *Windagal*, Point Piper, NSW (1956 – since demolished); Flinders *House*, Flinders (1958); Bardas *House,* South Yarra (1958, since demolished); *Simon House*, Mount Eliza (1963, substantially altered); *Russell Drysdale*, Bouddi National park Farm, Killcare Heights, NSW (1965, *House*); Fairfax *Pavilion*, Bowral, NSW (1969 – Retford Park Mansion, local heritage item); *Seccull House*, Brighton (1972, recently recommended for inclusion on the VHR as a registered place, March 2021); *Willy House*, Toorak (1972); and *Grant House*, Officer (1986 – Cardinia Shire, HO130). Relatively few Bell designs are affected by HOs and about a quarter of his houses are believed to have been demolished.

63   Goad, *Modern Melbourne*, p74 (chapter 6); and Norman Day, *Heroic Melbourne Architecture of the 1950s*, RMIT Publication, 1995, p17

- 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)

- *Beddison/Swift House*, 5 Crown Road, Ivanhoe (recommended for a HO by this Study) – a multigenerational cuboid and brick residence designed by Bell & Clerehan and built in 1963. Clerehan was the primary designer, although Bell is understood to have insisted on utilising floor-to-ceiling windows throughout the frontage and may have influenced its perfect symmetry.

Box House and *Beddison/Swift House* are the other principal examples of rationalist/'classical' modernism in Banyule. However, both are subtly more expressive of Clerehan's low-key design mode and penchant for stylish carports. *Purcell House*, the only design in Banyule in which Bell's hand was dominant (if not entirely unaccompanied), is a complete encapsulation of what became his remarkably consistent, formalised design approach. Viewed more widely in his oeuvre, it is one of the few Bell residences from his mature, increasing complex phase (after 1960) that incorporates a front garden or had a suburban setting.

An array of architect-designed modernist houses are included on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in 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'.

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.

Intactness

Highly intact

Previous Assessment

- Context, *Banyule Heritage Review*, March 2012, p39 – 'researched but not recommended [*for a HO*]' (NB – Context were not aware that Guilford Bell was the designer)
- National Trust (VIC), File Number B7351, nominated for State heritage listing

- 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
Internal Alteration Controls	Yes (general floorplan, mountain ash ceilings, walls of exposed concrete blocks or vertically laid boarding, and coverable fireplace)
Tree Controls	Yes (Lemon-scented and Spotted gums, front garden)
Outbuildings and/or fences	Yes (original carport)

Extent of Heritage Overlay

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

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