

Beddison/Swift House Statement of Significance

Heritage Place: 5 Crown Road, Ivanhoe

PS ref no: HO207



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 the 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 local 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 numbers 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 *Birrarung*/Yarra River banks 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)

Primary source

Banyule Heritage Study 2020 (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants)