

Welsh House Statement of Significance

Heritage Place: 4 Eton Court, Heidelberg

PS ref no: HO205



What is Significant?

Welsh House at 4 Eton Court, Heidelberg is significant. It was designed around 1965 by the architect Charles Duncan and then built chiefly by its initial owners, Graham and Adele Welsh, over several years.

The significant elements are the three interlinked wings, bellcast hipped roofs, broad eaves, white sheeted-soffits, chimney, exposed recycled brick walls with raked joints, arrangement of the piers, double carport, and timber-framed fenestration (floor-to-ceiling windows, casements, hinged doors).

The central courtyard and terraced 'bush style' front garden complement the overall aesthetic of the place.

Some original elements to the interior are also significant, specifically the long passageway in the east wing, internal walls of exposed brick and shiplap timber boarding, slate paved floors, ceilings of white-painted plaster sheeting, redwood-lined pyramidal ceiling, the brick fireplace, and the channelled timber kitchen island.

Later addition elements are not significant.

How is it Significant?

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

Why is it Significant?

Welsh House is of historical significance as a notable example of the neo-Wrightian organic design mode by the architect Charles Duncan. This approach evolved as a striking variant of Melbourne's modern movement, reflecting an aspiration among a relatively small group of architects to develop a regionalised, more humanist version of international modernism. While Duncan was celebrated in his heyday, his role in advancing and popularising a convincing regional idiom in Melbourne is now less generally recognised. *Welsh House*, awarded *The Age*/RAIA Citation (no 9) at its completion in 1972, offers a fine opportunity to examine Duncan's distinctive and considered design approach, reflecting contemporary ideas of

living and a new interest in local landscapes and conditions. As a largely owner-built residence, *Welsh House* is an impressive and later instance of the Do-It-Yourself phenomenon, a trend that was integral in shaping the municipality's built environment in the decades after the Second World War. (Criterion A)

Welsh House is of aesthetic significance as a substantial and largely intact example of 1960s organic/regional modernism. The residence has a distinct, robustly massed composition, with three interconnected wings arranged around a central courtyard and terraced garden. The hipped roofs with bellcast profile that cap each wing are elegant and distinguishing elements within the municipality. *Welsh House*'s design evokes an intimate connection to place, an aspect uncommon within its well-established suburban context. This design attribute is reinforced by the limited, recycled palette of Hawthorn bricks, slate and timber, both externally and internally, which bestows a rugged and 'earthy' character upon *Welsh House*. Grounding the residence into the landscape are the carport's hefty columns and the slender piers that articulate the gallery of the east wing. Generous glazing allows for ready views of the encompassing 'bush style' garden from within the meticulously detailed and plush interior. (Criterion E)

Primary source

Banyule Heritage Study 2020 (RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants)