

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

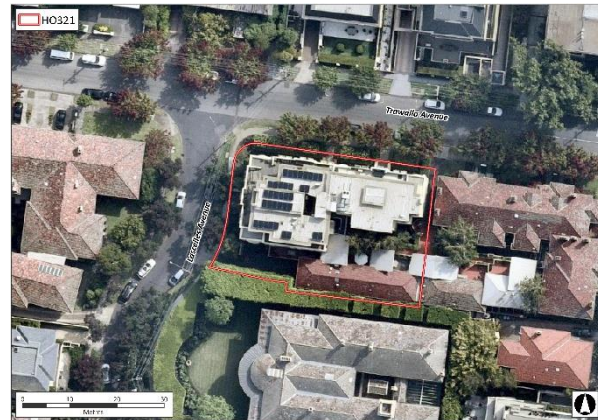
Heritage Place: Trawalla Court
Address: 1-6/24 Lascelles Avenue, Toorak

HO Reference: HO321
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 25 October 2023
Year of Construction: 1931

Designer: Gordon J. Sutherland
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Trawalla Court (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO321.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Flats

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Developing higher density living – developing apartment living

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 24 Lascelles Avenue, Toorak (otherwise known as Trawalla Court) is significant. Specifically, the scale, form and detailing of the Art Deco apartment block (original three levels and chimneys), brick entry stairs and brick garden edging are locally significant. The fourth floor of the building and plantings are not significant.

How is it significant?

Trawalla Court is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Trawalla Court is of historical importance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century high rise apartment buildings within the suburb of Toorak, during a time when some existing residents protested against the erection of flats within a suburb that was previously known for its affluent freestanding homes. (Criterion A)

Trawalla Court is aesthetically significant as an intact, visually distinct and unusual example of an early 20th century Interwar Art Deco apartment block designed by architect Gordon J. Sutherland. Key characteristics contributing towards its aesthetic value include the scale, arched diocletian windows, entrance stairs and detailing, decorative plasterwork and roughcast render, decorative parapet, curved bays below some windows and brick garden edging. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Trawalla Court is of historical importance in demonstrating the development of early 20th century high rise apartment buildings within the suburb of Toorak, during a time when some existing residents protested against the erection of flats within a suburb that was previously known for its affluent freestanding homes.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Trawalla Court is aesthetically significant as an intact, visually distinct and unusual example of an early 20th century Interwar Art Deco

		apartment block designed by architect Gordon J. Sutherland. Key characteristics contributing towards its aesthetic value include the scale, arched diocletian windows, entrance stairs and detailing, decorative plasterwork and roughcast render, decorative parapet, curved bays below some windows and brick garden edging.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Trawalla Court is a four-storey, rendered and painted masonry apartment block built in an Art Deco style. The original structure was three-storeys in height. The fourth level is a contemporary addition, with a flat corrugated iron roof and building services. The freestanding building occupies a steeply graded site on an east-west axis with Lascelles Avenue on the west boundary of the site at the lowest grade. The freestanding building allows access from both Trawalla Avenue and Lascelles Avenue to garage car parking at the rear.

The apartment building is situated on a face brick building base, used to level the sloping site and to provide an elevated aspect to the street front façades. There are two main entrances to the building, one from Trawalla and one from Lascelles Avenue. The Lascelles Avenue entrance is accessible by a set of broad open face brick stairs with piers detailed by a rendered cap and decorative cast urn finial. The entrance is recessed and features a wide three-pane timber French door and terrazzo flooring. The entrance is further characterised by highly detailed scone lights with red glazed glass and an expressed decorative festoon, shield and urn moulding. The Trawalla Avenue façade presents as two entrances. The left entrance is similar in design and detailing as the Lascelles Avenue entrance. The right entrance less detailed and is accessible via a shorter set of three stairs with the steps and recessed entrance laid in ceramic tiling. The stairs are flanked by squat open face brick piers with an orange rendered cap. The Trawalla Avenue entrance door is a contemporary single timber door with centred narrow windowpane and sidelights with glazed glass.

The Trawalla Avenue façade assumes an asymmetrical, nine bay arrangement. The flanking bays have eight-pane white aluminium awning windows on the first and second floors, and arched awning windows on the third floor. The first and second floor openings appear to be supported by an expressed arched balcony with a group of three centred brackets. The first floor opening mirrors this arched form in the structure and brick foundation. The fifth central bay is similar in layout. All three bays have a distinct four course Chevron laid parapet above the third level.

Counting from the left, bays two, four, seven and eight are similar in form and design. Paired four-pane double hung timber sash windows with sills occupy the first and second floors. The third floor features a full-length timber French door opening onto a small balcony with black iron balustrade and paired deep brackets. The French door openings are characterised by a rectilinear window head consisting of expressed vertical mouldings.

The third and seventh entrance bays present a single set of windows on the left entrance and a paired set on the right. The window forms and details are similar to the previously described bays. The left entrance bay features a rose and vine mouldings set in an expressed defined vertical rectilinear base mould. The name of the building, 'Trawalla Court', is cast into the render above the entry. All the bays except the bays with the Chevron parapet feature decorative stucco wave shaped motif mouldings recessed along the length of the parapet.

The Lascelles Avenue façade presents a symmetrical façade with a massing that is more recognisable in the Art Deco form with the distinctive stepped façade. Visible from beyond the top of the front façade is a set of paired centred wide rendered chimneys with three painted terracotta pots on the fourth level.

Trawalla Court is slightly set back from the street. The Lascelles Avenue street front is defined by brick edging with garden bed planting including young birch trees (*betula*) and rose shrubs (*rosa*). The Trawalla Avenue frontage is defined by a row of young coniferous trees and lawn with brick edging around the tree. Brick edging also runs along the perimeter of the structure to the walkways and planted with a low hedge and standard rose bushes (*rosa*).

Trawalla Court is located on the corner of Trawalla and Lascelles Avenue. It is close to the main Canterbury and Toorak Roads. The Trawalla Court remains in use as a multi-dwelling building and is considered to be in good condition. The façade of the structure appears to be largely intact. While there is a contemporary fourth level addition that occupies the footprint of the structure, it is stepped back and remains minimally visible from the street level. The extension is finished in a similar colour to the façade and would be considered sympathetic. The structure has high integrity overall.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)
- Contemporary fourth floor addition.
- Solar panels and services on roof added.
- Tiled flooring in secondary entrance on Trawalla Avenue.
- Garage parking.
- Introduction of new plantings.

History

• Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

Following the establishment of Melbourne in 1835, squatter John Gardiner and many others like him sought out land in what would become present day Toorak and surrounds on account of its densely timbered landscape, undulating terrain and proximity to water. By 1840, crown land sales marked the area's transition to pastoral settlement, and later in 1851, with the purchase of land in Hawthorn by Thomas Herbert Power, the surrounding environments gradually became a place where the early merchant and squatter elite of Melbourne built their homesteads. In Toorak, this is best represented by the purchase of lot 26 by James Jackson, associate in Jackson, Rae & Co. soap and candle merchants. Jackson was described by politician William Westgarth as 'Melbourne's greatest merchant of this early time' (Forster 1999, 10). It is only fitting that his house, called Toorak House, would be the namesake of what would become arguably the most affluent suburb in Melbourne. Following the discovery of gold in the 1850s and the wealth this produced for ancillary trades, the Toorak area drew in Melbourne's newly wealthy. Today, over a century later, Toorak still has connotations of wealth and prestige as best represented in its history and built environment (Forster 1999, 5–26).

• Place History

The land on which Trawalla Court sits was formerly part of the twelve and a half acre Trawalla Estate that covered the majority of the block bounded by Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Grange Road and Robertson Street (MMBW 1905). Plans to develop residential flats transpired following the subdivision of the Estate in 1930, and the sale of Trawalla Mansion in February 1931 (Table Talk 1930, 57; The Herald 1931, 4). A newspaper article in 1931 notes the buyers' plan to 'erect in the near future, high-class residential flats on the most up-to-date lines on the land adjacent to the old mansion homestead' (The Herald 1931, 4). By May 1931, plans were underway to erect a building of three storeys comprising of terraced flats with a basement laundry (The Herald 1931, 13). While a previous citation for Trawalla Court cites Lewis Levy as the designer, further investigation reveals this to be incorrect. Rather, the architect responsible for the flats is Gordon J. Sutherland, as indicated in a 1931 newspaper article that details the plans for Trawalla Court (The Herald 1931, 13).

Predominantly known for designing flats and residences during the interwar period, Sutherland typically worked on buildings in the affluent suburbs of Armadale, Toorak and Kew (Australian Architectural Index 2016). Construction of the building was likely completed in late 1931/1932, and the manager of the flats was South Yarra real estate firm Williams and Co. At the time of its completion, Trawalla Court comprised two main entrances, one from Lascelles Avenue, and the other from Trawalla Avenue. The main entrance hall contained a front staircase and entrance to the flats, while each flat contained its own entrance hall and built-in coat cupboard (The Herald 1931, 13). Larger flats featured a living room

and dining room opening from the hall, two bedrooms, balcony, kitchen and bathroom (The Herald 1931, 13).

Known occupants during the initial few decades included Ruth Rodgers in 1933; Edith Lamb, pastoralist and owner of Bullawah Station in the 1940s; and Diana Dixon in 1946 (The Herald 1933, 14; Daily Advertiser 1941, 4; The Herald 1946, 10). As with the numerous contemporaneous flats erected in Toorak, Trawalla Court was known for housing single people, particularly women, a distinct contrast to the traditional nuclear families that occupied the larger houses in the surrounding area.

The proliferation of flats in Toorak during this period did not take place without backlash. The year 1934 saw residents protesting against the erection of flats on Toorak Road, with conservative local church leader Reverend A. Law proclaiming that 'general flat life is not conducive to the highest moral and social standards of the community' (The Herald 1934, 12; The Age 1934, 7).

Given the lack of historical material on Trawalla towards the end of the 20th century, the known occupants and alterations during this period are difficult to ascertain. The addition for the fourth floor was likely inserted in the 21st century and comprises a penthouse. Current floorplans of the original flats indicate a mixture of altered and unaltered interior features.

Comparative Analysis

Designed by Gordon J. Sutherland, Trawalla Court is comparable to other flats designed by the architect, as well as duplex and single-household domestic examples. The use of Interwar Spanish Mission styling is a common denominator across Gordon J. Sutherland's work, and will be addressed through comparable examples below. The use of Spanish Mission styling across the majority of Sutherland's work contrasts with the Art Deco styling present at Trawalla Court. Whilst examples of Sutherland's work have been identified in St Kilda, no examples other than Trawalla Court have been identified in Toorak. The examples in St Kilda however are representative of Sutherland's work, and are still considered comparable. Another example by Lewis Levy has been identified as a of comparable design qualities, highlighting the significance of Trawalla Court.

Comparative examples include:

- **Inverleith Court (14A Acland Street, St Kilda) (HO5).** Inverleith Court in St Kilda is a multi-storey apartment block constructed to the designs of Gordon J. Sutherland. Directly comparable to Trawalla Court, Inverleith Court is a clear example of Sutherland's high density apartment design. Features shared between both sites include the use of arched diocletian windows (now partially filled in at Inverleith Court), roughcast render, and projecting entrance treatments (usually with an arched vestibule). Key difference relates to the roofs; Trawalla Court has been designed with a parapet concealing the roof while Inverleith Court has a low-pitched gabled roof with deep eaves. However, the roof form at Inverleith Court is typical of Spanish Mission style design, with deep eaves casting shadow on the façade. The use of terracotta tiling, whether Cordova or Marseilles, is also typical of Spanish Mission styling, and Inverleith includes the Marseilles variety. Both examples, however, can be recognised as clear representations of Sutherland's interwar multi-storey apartment design.
- **Inverleith Mansions (11 Eildon Road, St Kilda) (HO5).** Inverleith Mansions, not to be confused with the above Inverleith Court, is another example of Sutherland's interwar Spanish Mission

inspired apartment design. A multi-storey structure, the Mansions are clearly representative of Sutherland's design aesthetic. The use of arched diocletion windows, projecting entrance treatment and roughcast render are all features represented in Sutherland's works. Where the above example has a roof form with exposed eaves, Inverleith Mansions is similar to Trawalla Court where it utilises a parapet. While both Inverleith Court and Mansions utilise decorative curved gable designs, Trawalla Court has no gables, but an almost herringbone decoration on the parapet, clearly defining it as more Art Deco than Spanish Mission. All three sites, however, regardless of differences in specific style, can clearly be recognised as the product of Gordon J Sutherland's interwar designs.

- **The Astor (326 Beaconsfield Parade, St Kilda West) (HO444).** The Astor flats are comparable to Trawalla Court as a set of interwar Spanish Mission influenced flats designed by architect Lewis Levy. Levy was working concurrently in Melbourne with Gordon J. Sutherland. Aesthetically, both apartment Trawalla Court and The Astor share many designed features, including the use of rectilinear form, render, stepped entrance treatments projecting from the main form of the building, symmetry, arched diocletion windows, and terracotta roof tiling. The Astor and Trawalla Court can be recognised as two distinct styles but similar examples interwar flat design.

The above comparative analysis illustrates Gordon J. Sutherland's grasp on both Interwar Spanish Mission and Art Deco design. The contrast between Sutherland's Spanish Mission work and the Art Deco style present at Trawalla Court highlights the significance of Trawalla Court as an unusual example of Sutherland's work, albeit one that possesses the high-quality design of Sutherland's portfolio of apartment buildings.

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



Corner of Trawalla Court, looking south east (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Western elevation of Trawalla Court (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Detail of windows on north western corner (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Western elevation (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Detail of the western elevation showing the building name (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Parapet detailing on south western corner (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Detail view of north western corner (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Intact urns on western elevation stair (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



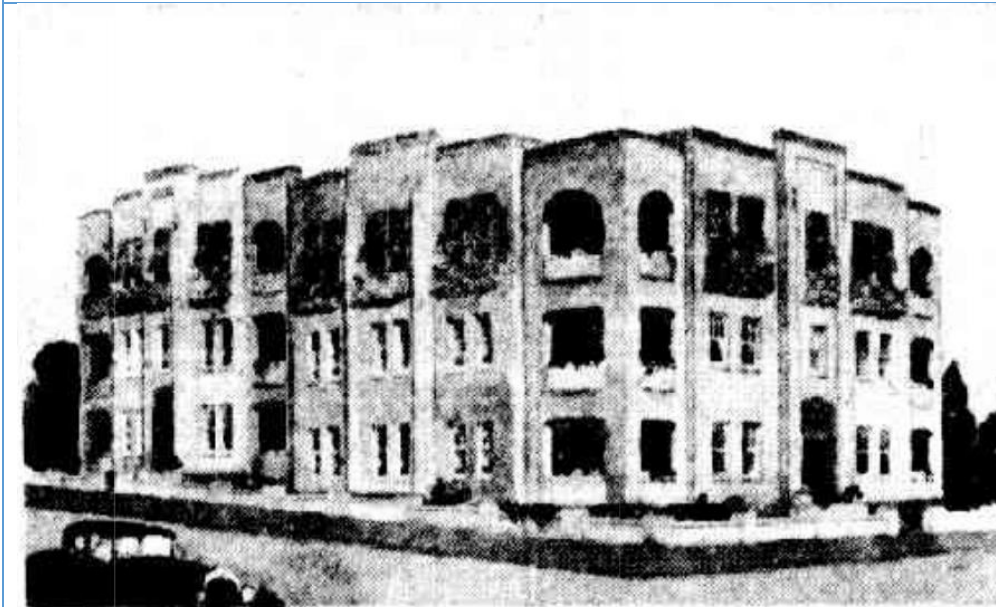
Lane separating No. 24 from 14 Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Parapet detailing on western elevation, showing the contemporary fourth floor addition (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Trawalla Court, not long after construction was completed (source: Ettelson, P. E. W. (1929). *[Residential apartment building of three stories, flat roof, on corner]* [picture]).



Gordon J. Sutherland's architectural perspective sketch of Trawalla Court in 1931. (source: The Herald, 1931).

Authors

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