Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Hallows House
Address: 184 Kooyong Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO737
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 7 April 2022

Designer: Guilford Bell
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1975



Photograph of Hallows House (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 184 Kooyong Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Functional, eccentric and theatrical – experimentation and innovation in architecture

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Recommended for the Heritage Overlay as an individual place; tree controls recommended in relation to the mature holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) in the front courtyard.

Controls:	☐	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	■ Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 184 Kooyong Road, Toorak (otherwise known as Hallows House) is significant. The form, materiality, siting, fenestration, axial floor plan and enclosed forecourt of the Post-war Modernist house is of local significance, along with the original carport and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) tree that pre-dates the house in the forecourt. Later alterations and additions to the property (including the front fence) are not significant.

How is it significant?

Hallows House is of local representative significance to the City of Stonnington. It also has associative significance as a design by the prolific Post-war Modernist Australian architect Guilford Bell.

Why is it significant?

Hallows House is of representative significance as an exceptionally intact and well-articulated example of Bell's oeuvre that demonstrates aesthetic restraint, a rectilinear form and symmetrical planning that combines the tenets of Post-war residential Modernism with classical architectural principles. This is most evident in its highly ordered axial planning, striking brick paved forecourt, symmetrical form, unpainted recycled brick and visual concealment from the street front, which achieves Bell's signature balance between monumental boldness and urban discreteness. The incorporation of the pre-existing holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) tree within the forecourt is also of particular note, and not only provides both a focal point and contrasting vertical element against the otherwise horizontal structure, but demonstrates Bell's skillful integration of picturesque landscape qualities in architectural design. (Criterion D)

Hallows House is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the prolific Post-war Modernist Australian architect Guilford Bell during the height of his solo career. Hallows House exemplifies all the elements characteristic of Bell's signature including a concern for visual concealment, ornamental restraint and axial planning. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	Hallows House is of representative significance as an exceptionally intact and well-articulated example of Bell's oeuvre that demonstrates aesthetic restraint, a rectilinear form and symmetrical planning that combines the tenets of Post-war residential Modernism

		with classical architectural principles. This is most evident in its highly ordered axial planning, striking brick paved forecourt, symmetrical form, unpainted recycled brick and visual concealment from the street front, which achieves Bell's signature balance between monumental boldness and urban discreteness. The incorporation of the pre-existing holm oak (Quercus ilex) tree within the forecourt is also of particular note, and not only provides both a focal point and contrasting vertical element against the otherwise horizontal structure, but demonstrates Bell's skillful integration of picturesque landscape qualities in architectural design. (Criterion D)
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	This place does not meet this criterion.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*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*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	Hallows House is of associative significance as a highly distinctive residential design by the prolific Post-war Modernist Australian architect Guilford Bell during the height of his solo career. Hallows House exemplifies all the elements characteristic of Bell's signature including a concern for visual concealment, ornamental restraint and axial planning. Modernist

Description

• Physical Analysis

Hallows House is a single storey brick residence built in the Post-war Modernist style. The face red (recycled) brick structure is laid with a stretcher bond and employs a flat roof with corrugated sheet metal. The roof profile is hidden by a flat parapet flush to the façade. The structure is primarily defined by its distinctly symmetrical 'U' shaped plan, with an enclosed square open courtyard on its north side, and rectilinear form defined by clean horizontal lines. As expected for its style, the residence lacks ornamentation, however the face brickwork adds a visual texture and richness to the design that is not common to other comparable Modernist designs in the area.

The front façade is highly simplified in style, lacking fenestration and thus emphasising the rectilinear and horizontal structural form. Freestanding face brick walls extend towards the street and a black rectilinear, non-original wrought iron fence forms an enclosed forecourt. The forecourt includes two in-ground garden beds set into the stepped sections of the wall. A large and mature holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) is also centred behind the wrought iron fence forming a focal point of the front of the residence. The forecourt is paved in brick in a stretcher bond.

A garage with a white roller garage door extends from the left side of the façade, accessible from the street via an open driveway paved in brick also in a stretcher bond. The driveway and pathway are lined with Arborvitae (Thuja cv) trees. The Arborvitae trees and holm oak tree form strong organic vertical elements against the horizontal structural built form.

The internal courtyard is accessible via a central timber pivot door with sidelights, recessed behind the front facade. Repetitive square brick columns flank the threshold between the structure and the enclosed internal courtyard. A pathway between the boundary fence and right freestanding wall leads to the concealed main entrance on the south elevation of the house.

184 Kooyong Road remains in use as a residential property. It is considered to be in good condition and of high integrity.

• Alterations and Additions

- Front boundary fence added.
- Skylights added to the roof.
- Conservatory enclosed and wall added.

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).

- ## Modernism in Toorak

Toorak's wealthy clientele and strong culture of patronage has long provided architects with the space to explore ideas and innovation in design and construction (Context 2009, 138). While this was taking place from as early as the interwar period, this phenomenon soon paved way for Modernist expression in residential design by the 1940s.

Initially explored in Europe between 1905 and 1917, and subsequently disseminated, translated and transformed worldwide over the next fifty years, the Modernist idiom was primarily defined by abstraction in built form, restraint in ornamentation, clean architectural lines, open plans, a connection between indoor spaces and outdoor spaces, and the incorporation of new materials like concrete, steel and glass (Goad and Willis 2012, 464). In Toorak, a combination of patronage, post-war boom time economy and suburban growth enabled leading Australian Modernist architects to adapt this style to the country's specific climate. What emerged was a Modernist aesthetic rooted in experimentation with geometric forms, raised structures and indoor-outdoor spaces. Architects like Robin Boyd and Roy Grounds were creating innovative and experimental Modernist designs to fit with the difficult topography or otherwise constrained nature of sites. For instance, Boyd's Richardson's House at 10 Blackfriars Close (1953) comprises a bridge-like structure suspended above a creek bed, while Grounds' own house at 24 Hill Street (1950s), celebrated as an architectural experimentation in pure geometry, has been noted for its defining circular glass walled courtyard set within a square of solid brick walls.

Bold, innovative and above all experimental, architects practicing within the Modernist idiom established new forms of creative and technical expression, ultimately challenging the formal and decorative assumptions that dominated the architecture of the 19th and early 20th century.

- ## ModernismPlace History

The land on which Hallows House presently sits formerly comprised the substantial grounds of the Victorian era Kenley Estate (MMBW 1902). Erected in 1874, its land was later subdivided in 1938, paving way for residential development in the area (Beauchamp Brothers 1938; Foster 1999, 46-47). This process reflected the wider pattern of subdivision and development that was taking place across Toorak during the interwar period. While the subdivision of large estates had been taking place before this period, rising labour costs following World War I made the cost of servants and other workers to

maintain the estates prohibitive (Context Pty Ltd 2006). This resulted in intense urban character changes in the area, particularly in the form of grand architect designed homes situated on generous allotments. From as early as the interwar period, Toorak's strong culture of patronage provided architects with the space to explore ideas and innovation in design and construction (Context 2009, 138). As a result, the Modernist movement following World War II would also found expression in the suburb.

In the case of Kenley Estate, subdivision resulted in the creation of Kenley Court and twenty-two generously sized allotments fronting Kooyong Road, Albany Road and Kenley Court (Beauchamp Brothers 1938). Several interwar dwellings were erected on these new allotments following subdivision, although the land at the future Hallows House appears to have remained vacant, with 1945 aerial photography showing an undeveloped lot with several substantial plantings (Adastra Airways 1945). It was not developed until 1975 when Hallows House was erected to designs by the leading Post-war Modernist architect Guilford Bell.

Born in Brisbane and part of the prominent pastoral Bell family of rural Queensland, Guilford Bell registered as an architect in 1936, before travelling to London to work for the noted British architect Albert E. Richardson (Pixley 1979; Goad and Willis 2011, 77). After returning to Australia and working as an architect for Ansett Australia in 1946, Bell commenced private practice in Melbourne in the 1952, with a focus on residential work for a wealthy and influential client base. It was during this period in which he developed several architectural characteristics that would become hallmarks of his approach to residential design – extreme privacy, anonymous street frontages and highly ordered plans (Heritage Victoria 2021). Epitomised in the use of blank walls to the street, pavilion carports, symmetry and aesthetic austerity in his designs, Bell's design approach, which combined Modernist ideals with Classical notions of order, anonymity and retreats from the city, was considered radical for the 1950s and out of step from mainstream Melbourne architects who were committed to an open and free approach to form and structure (Goad and Willis 2011, 78).

From 1961 to 1964, Bell worked in partnership with Neil Clerehan, who shared with him an aesthetic concern for blank walls, privacy and discreet urbanity (Goads and Willis 2011, 77). Following this period, he returned to work as a sole practitioner in domestic architecture, and designed across Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales (Pixley 1979). His most recognised works include Purcell House at 17 Hartlands Road, Ivanhoe East (1962), Seccull House at 32 North Road, Brighton (1972), 5 Buller Terrace, Templestowe (1972-73) and Grant House at 36 Whiteside Road, Officer (1989).

Constructed for one Dr Hallows, the residence comprises one bedroom, reflecting pool, living room, conservatory and sitting room, and was specifically designed to accommodate a solo resident (Imrie 1982) (see Further Images). Other noted features include a forecourt dominated by an already established holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) tree and visual concealment from the street front. It is unknown as to precisely how long Hallows occupied the residence for, although property records indicate that it was sold in 1986, 1987 and again in 1996.

Comparative Analysis

Distinguished by its characteristically modest and private street presence, Hallows House exemplifies the elements of Bell's oeuvre, including axial planning, interior courtyard spaces and aesthetic restraint. While Bell's other works within the City of Stonnington similarly express these features, none has yet been afforded heritage protection. The following comparative analysis therefore draws from examples elsewhere in Victoria that have either been granted or recommended for heritage listing.

Comparative examples include:

- **Seccull House, 32 North Road, Brighton (VHR H2406).** Constructed in 1972, Seccull House is directly comparable to Hallows House as encompassing Bell's signature approach to Post-war minimalist Modernism. While it is more articulated and resolved than Hallows House, the two nevertheless share key aesthetic similarities including the use of axial planning behind a restrained and simplified street presence, rectilinear form, harmonious proportions and ornamental restraint. As opposed to the use of unpainted recycled bricks and reinforced concrete floors at Hallows House, Seccull House makes use of high quality finishes such as travertine, marble, glass and black still. It is of a similar level of integrity to Hallows House.
- **5 Buller Terrace, Lower Templestowe (HO124 Manningham City).** Constructed in 1972-73, 5 Buller Terrace is a Bell design from the same era. It has been assessed as being a 'seminal design by the important domestic architect Guilford Bell, which is characteristic of his work and is thought to have influenced later designs by the same architect.'. It is directly comparable to Hallows House in terms of its highly ordered floor plan, concealment from the street and brick materiality. Unlike Hallows House however, it is distinguished by its prominent pyramidal pavilion form rising above the central living room. While remaining substantially intact, it is of a lower integrity to Hallows House by virtue of several later additions.
- **Grant House, 36 Whiteside Road, Officer (HO130 Cardinia Shire).** Constructed in 1989 to designs by Bell, Grant House is the last home designed by Bell. Situated in the middle of a large, elevated area of lawn, this renowned house is defined by its prominent monument-like tent symmetrical form and pyramidal roof. While this renders it distinct from the rectilinear form at Hallows House, it nevertheless maintains several noted similarities. These include its highly ordered axial floor plan, balanced proportions, brick paved courtyard, skillful incorporation of landscape features and minimalist aesthetic.

Although Hallows House is not the most readily recognised nor celebrated example of Bell's impressive body of Post-war Modernist work, it is nevertheless a key and exceptionally intact design that illustrates his signature articulation of concealment, symmetry, order and restrained minimalism in residential design. Designed in 1975, Hallows House also provides important insight into Bell's design approach as a solo practitioner during the height of his architectural career.

References

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Beauchamp Brothers. 1938. *Kenley Estate, Toorak, corner of Albany and Kooyong Roads: Toorak's premier subdivision: 22 magnificent allotments.* [4] Map. In collection: Auctioneers' plans, Melbourne and suburbs. ID: 1247287. State Library of Victoria. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/243326?urlappend=%26mode=overview.

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Pixley, Norman S. (1979) *Bell, James Thomas Marsh* (1839-1903). https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/syme-hugh-randall-11815.

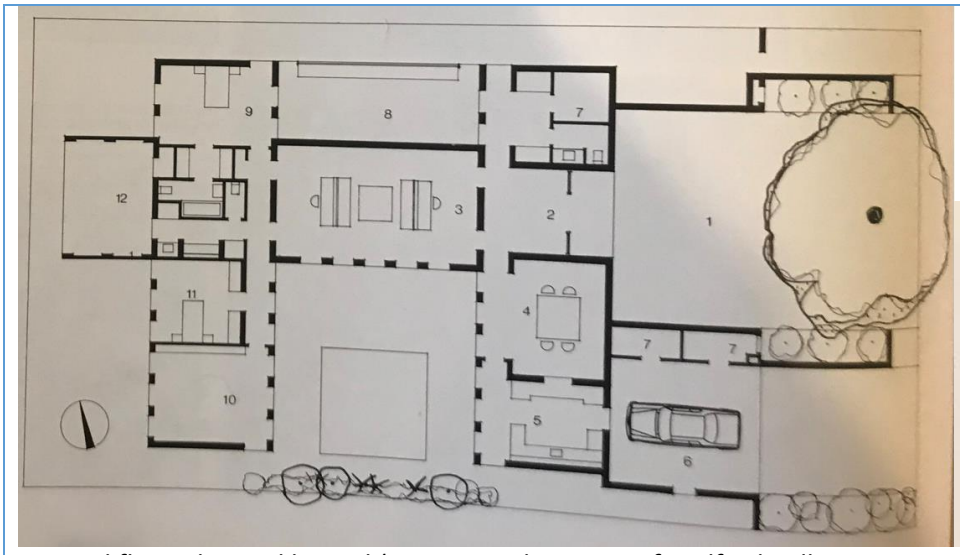
State Library of Victoria, Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works, detail plan No. 1764, dated 1902.

State Library of Victoria, Sands & McDougall Street Directories of Victoria, 1974 ed.

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



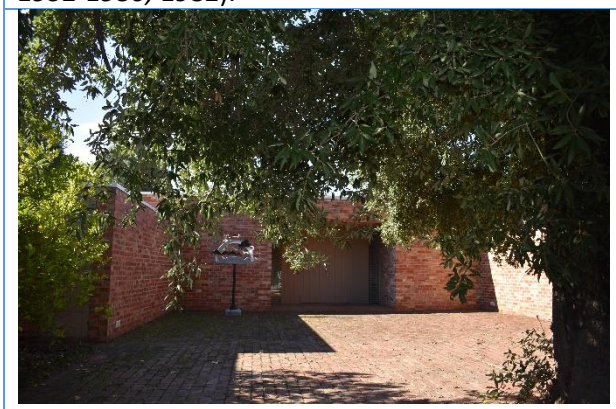
Original floor plan and legend (source: *Architecture of Guilford Bell 1952-1980,* 1982).



Overview of Hallows House from Kooyong Road, taken c.1982 (source: *Architecture of Guilford Bell 1952-1980,* 1982).



View of internal courtyard, taken c.1982 (source: *Architecture of Guilford Bell 1952-1980,* 1982).



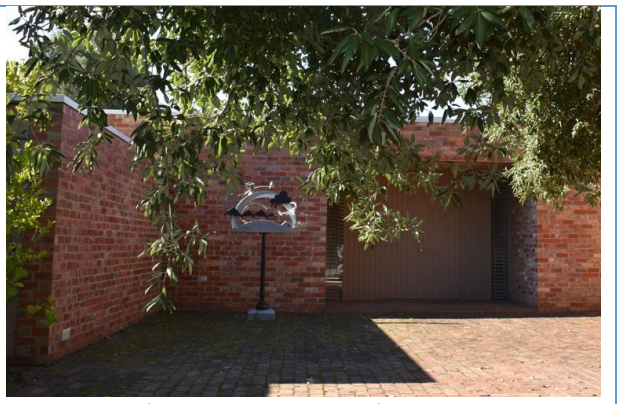
Overview of façade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



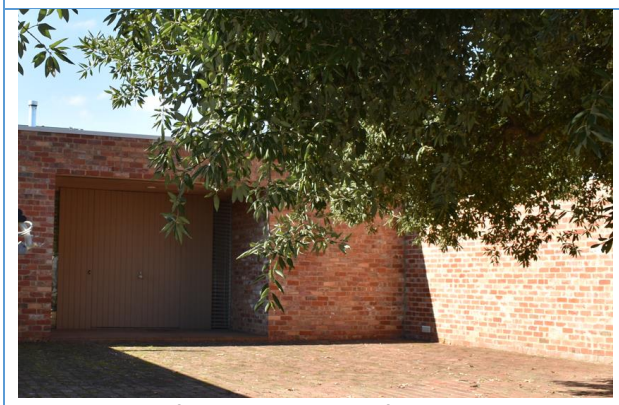
Overview of the site from Kooyong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of wrought iron front boundary fence and façade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



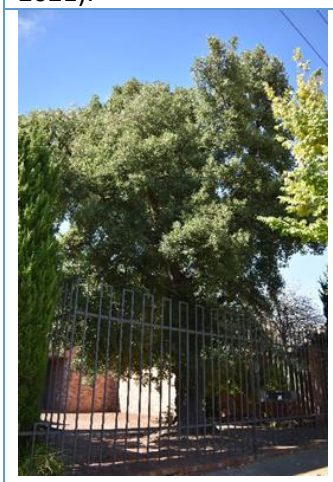
North-east facing detail view of unpainted brick façade and double entrance doors (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of unpainted brick façade and double entrance doors (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing oblique aerial view (source: Nearmap, 2021).



View of mature holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) within forecourt (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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