

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Milne House
Address: 1 Glenbervie Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO738
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 24 March 2022
Year of Construction: 1970

Designer: Robin Boyd
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of 1 Glenbervie Road, Toorak (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of 1 Glenbervie 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. External paint controls are recommended in relation to the original monochromatic colour scheme. Recommended that outbuildings and fence are not exempt from notice and review provisions in relation to the original bagged brick front boundary wall enclosed around private courtyard.

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| Controls: | <input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1 Glenbervie Road, Toorak, (otherwise known as Milne House), is significant. The form, scale, fenestration, materiality and colour of the Post-war Modernist house is of local significance, along with the original carport (now a garage) and boundary wall. The garage door, pool and other later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

Milne House is of local representative significance to the City of Stonnington. It also has associative significance as a design by the highly distinguished and influential Australian architect and critic Robin Boyd.

Why is it significant?

Milne House is of representative significance as a notable example of Post-war Modernist residential architecture through its experimentation with geometric forms, spatial arrangement and site responsiveness that typified the style. This is most evident in its combination of interlocking geometric skillion roof forms and thin clerestory windows to allow light ingress, appealing geometric composition, monochromatic colour palette, and resolution of a busy corner site via the use of a tall bagged brick boundary wall enclosed around a private courtyard. The 'H' shaped floor plan demarcating living and sleeping quarters is of particular note as a discernible example of spatial zoning and control as a central organising principle, which was gaining recognition in design by the 1960s. (Criterion D)

Milne House has associative significance as a residential design by the highly distinguished and influential architect Robin Boyd during the final years of his career. Its articulation of spatial control and monochromatic colour scheme in particular are features that exemplify Boyd's final body of Modernist works, and thus provide insight into his design approach by the mid to late 1960s. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

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| <i>A</i> | <i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i> | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| <i>B</i> | <i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i> | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| <i>C</i> | <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. |
| <i>D</i> | <i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i> | Milne House is of representative significance as a notable example of Post-war Modernist residential architecture through its experimentation with geometric forms, spatial arrangement and site responsiveness that typified the style. This is most evident in its combination of interlocking geometric skillion roof forms and thin clerestory |

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| | | windows to allow light ingress, appealing geometric composition, monochromatic colour palette and resolution of a busy corner site via the use of a tall bagged brick boundary wall enclosed around a private courtyard. The 'H' shaped floor plan demarcating living and sleeping quarters is of particular note as a discernible example of spatial zoning and control as a central organising principle, which was gaining recognition in design by the 1960s. |
| E | <i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i> | This place does not meet this criterion. |
| 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> | Milne House has associative significance as a residential design by the highly distinguished and influential architect Robin Boyd during the final years of his career. Its articulation of spatial control and monochromatic colour scheme in particular are features that exemplify Boyd's final body of Modernist works, and thus provide insight into his design approach by the mid to late 1960s. |

Description

• Physical Analysis

Milne House is a single-storey Post-war Modernist residence designed by Robin Boyd. It comprises a white bagged brick structure, a flat and skillion roof with Trimdek metal cladding and is built as a split level with a lower ground floor that allows for double height ceilings and open interior spaces. The skillion roof line creates a distinct profile and geometric structural form that is visible from its prominent corner location. A single wide rendered brick chimney projects from the south wing skillion roof. The structure has an 'H' shaped plan, forming wings that demarcate the different living and private spaces, exemplifying the 'served and servant space' concept espoused by the Modernist idiom.

The elevations visible from the street level eschew ornamentation and large fenestration, instead drawing attention to the clean lines that define the structure. The only visible fenestration are the recessive thin clerestory windows located under the upper pitch of the skillion roofs. The residence is set back from Glenbervie Road and comprises a concealed main entrance set within a second enclosed courtyard behind the swimming pool. A third enclosed courtyard is set within the structure on the western end. Modernist design principles are further expressed in the use of courtyards to delineate internal spaces and mediate the threshold between the inside and outside.

Other key features include an original carport that has been converted into a garage with a counterweight garage door, as well as an original bagged brick wall at the front enclosed around the northern private courtyard with a swimming pool and in ground garden beds along the perimeter. The courtyard is also planted with a Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus sp.*) tree and a cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) tree. The driveway is demarcated from the footpath along Toorak Road by a wide landscaped verge planted with young native trees, grasses and rocks. A secondary entrance is set along the south boundary wall, leading to a small enclosed yard occupying the southwest corner of the property.

Milne House is currently in use as a residential property. The property is considered to be in good condition and has high integrity.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)
- Carport converted into a garage.
- Driveway repaved and partially relandscaped (after 2007).
- Pool 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 (Foster 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.

- [Place History](#)

The land on which Milne House sits was formerly part of the substantial grounds of the Victorian era Moonga Estate (MMBW 1907). The Moonga Estate was gradually subdivided and put up for sale throughout the early twentieth century, paving way for interwar suburban development in the area (Alway 1913). While the subdivision of large estates was common from as early as the late 19th century, rising labour costs following World War I made the cost of servants and other workers to maintain the estates prohibitive. This pattern of interwar subdivision not only resulted in changes to urban character but facilitated the rapid development of grand architect design homes throughout the interwar period.

A substantial interwar mansion known as Ingleburn was consequently erected on the site in 1911. While this residence currently sits on the adjoining 3 Glenbervie Road, its gardens included the land at present day Milne House (Adastra Airways 1945). The generous grounds of Ingleburn were subdivided in the post-war period, spearheading the initial development of the Milne House at what was 669 Toorak Road in 1966. Completed four years later in 1970 for the Milne family to designs by the prominent Modernist architect and critic Robin Boyd of the architectural practice Romberg and Boyd, Milne House is believed to be one of Boyd's last residential commissions before his death in 1971 (Clerehan 1993).

Born in 1919 in Armadale, Boyd studied at the Melbourne Technical College and the Melbourne University Architectural Atelier before entering into his first partnership, Associated Architects – Boyd

Pethebridge & Bell – in 1945 (Clerehan 1993). Following this period, he formed a new partnership with noted Modernist architects Federick Romberg and Roy Grounds in 1953. The partnership accepted a variety of commissions, including flats, factories, schools, churches and houses, and produced a distinctive form of the International Style, then called Contemporary (Clerehan 1993). Boyd's focus was on residential properties, and over a hundred houses were built to his designs. While Grounds subsequently left the partnership to design the Victorian Cultural (Arts) Centre, his proficiency with bold, geometric design had an enduring influence on Boyd's design style. Boyd was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1969 and was made honorary fellow in 1970, before passing away in 1971. His most noted works include the Former Robin Boyd House at 664-666 Riverside Road, Camberwell (1947), Richardson House (Bridge House) at 10 Blackfriars Close, Toorak (1954), Walsh Street House/Boyd House II at 290 Walsh Street, South Yarra (1958) and Baker House at 305-307 Long Forest Road, Long Forest (1964-1966).

Designed over four years between 1966 and 1970, Milne House encompasses Boyd's signature use of steep skillion roof forms, open plan living, clear demarcation of living and sleeping spaces, while simultaneously exemplifying a departure from his typical polychromatic aesthetic in its adoption of a single colour (Hyde 2019, 14). As with his signature works, the house typifies Boyd's receptiveness to the local site context through design. This is most evident in its capacity to resolve a difficult and busy corner site through careful enclosure of courtyard spaces, interlocking skillion roof forms and thin clerestory windows to allow light ingress, whilst also addressing the street frontages with an appealing geometric composition, and so balancing privacy and quiet enjoyment with streetscape contribution. Most importantly, the building's demarcation of various domestic spaces exemplifies Boyd's practice within what he coined the 'Third Phase of Modern Architecture' in 1965 (Boyd 1965, 51). Described as the art of controlling space, a 'whole hearted control of levels, volumes and the views within and beyond', both Milne House and Boyd's other later works exemplify Boyd's espousal of this design principle by the mid 1960s (Boyd 1965, 51). It is unknown precisely how long the Milne family occupied the residence for, although records indicate that it was ultimately sold in 2006, again in 2012, and most recently in 2021.

Comparative Analysis

Milne House provides insight into the Post-war Modernism that was being practiced by the late 1960s. Characterised by steep skillion roof forms in opposing combinations, clean geometric lines, restrained materiality, a monochromatic aesthetic, clear zoning between living and sleeping quarters, open plan living and receptiveness to the local site context through sitting, orientation and form, the residence not only embodies Boyd's innovative approach to Modernism, but illustrates the key features that typified the style. While there is currently a dearth of Post-war Modernist style residences on the municipal Heritage Overlay, those that are listed are compare well to Milne House in terms of design quality and intactness. These include:

- **Richardson House, 10 Blackfriars Close, Toorak (HO360).** Also designed by Robin Boyd, the Richardson House was constructed in 1954-55 and comprises a rhombus-shaped pavilion suspended over a creek bed. Described as a 'fine example of Boyd's domestic work and is of enhanced significance by virtue of its unusual and elegant structural system', this residence is an earlier, more innovative and more structurally expressive example of Boyd's oeuvre. While more indicative of Boyd's earlier radical experimentations with geometric form, the house still observes many of

Boyd's signature design features that are expressed at Milne House. These include site responsiveness, a preoccupation with geometry, concealed sitting, open floor plans, an absence of ornamentation, and restraint on materiality. Unlike Milne House, Richardson House has since undergone several alterations and additions to the exterior and interior, including a large three-storey addition on the west side of the original building. It is thus considered less a less intact example in comparison to Milne House.

- **35 Larnook Street, Prahran (HO645, currently under review as part of Stonnington Amendment C304).** Recommended by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd as an individually significant place on the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay, 35 Larnook Street is comparable to Milne House as a striking Post-war Modernist design that encompasses clean geometric lines, restraint in ornamentation, an integrated carport and brick materials. Constructed in 1959 by noted European émigré architect Bernard Slawik, this property is more reminiscent of the European Modernist design tradition, particularly with respect to its raised sitting on pilasters and street-facing first floor window wall with repetitive modules and opaque blue glass spandrels. Despite these varied approaches to the Modernist idiom, the two places nevertheless compare well in terms of intactness, design quality and stylistic innovation.

The most striking comparative example however, lies outside of the City of Stonnington, and includes one of Boyd's residential designs in the Bayside City Council area:

- **Fletcher House, 8 Avonbury Court, Brighton (HO410 Bayside City).** Designed by Boyd in 1967, Fletcher House is directly comparable to Milne House as one of Boyd's late Post-war Modernist residential designs distinguished by distinctive interlocking skillion roof forms on a corner location. As with Milne House, it is defined by Boyd's signature demarcation of space, consisting of three divided sections – a living/dining wing, bedroom wing and guest wing. Other analogous features include its restrained use of materiality, monochromatic colour palette, a connected garage, striking arrangement of geometric forms and lack of visible fenestration. Indeed, both Fletcher House and Milne House are important examples of Boyd's experimentation with spatial relationships, particularly the control of spaces as the organising principle of a building by the 1960s (Raisbeck and Phillips 2020, 16). Unlike Milne House, however, its original design consisted of exposed brick as opposed to white bagged brick. The brick at Fletcher House has since been painted over, detracting from its integrity.

As the above comparative example has shown, Milne House is a well-executed and expressive example of Post-war Modernist residential design by virtue of its emphasis on geometric form expressed via interlocking skillion roof forms, restrained materiality, open plan living, site responsiveness and absence of ornamentation. Moreover, it also retains importance as an example that exemplifies Robin Boyd's execution of concepts of zoning and spatial control in the later stages of his career. In this way, Milne House is not only representative of the Post-war Modernism that was being practiced towards the late 1960s, but is also a distinct example of Boyd's evolved design approach by the mid to late 1960s.

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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



North-east facing view of Milne House from Toorak Road in c.1968-1969 (source: Peter Wille, State Library of Victoria)



East facing view of side elevation in c.1968-1969 (source: Peter Wille, State Library of Victoria)



North-west facing view of Milne House from Glenbervie Road in c.1968-1969 (source: Peter Wille, State Library of Victoria)



West facing overview of Milne House from Glenbervie Road in c.1968-1969 (source: Peter Wille, State Library of Victoria)



Detail view of carport in 1970 (source: Mark Strizic, State Library of Victoria)



West facing view of Milne House from Glenbervie Road in 1970 (source: Mark Strizic, State Library of Victoria)



North-west facing overview of Milne House from Toorak Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing view of Milne House from Glenbervie Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North-west facing detail view of Milne House carport (now a garage), roof form and boundary wall (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing detail view of Milne House carport (now a garage), roof form and chimney (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing detail view of skillion roof form and chimney from Glenberive Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



North facing detail view of interlocking skillion roof forms, clerestory window and chimney (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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Quality assurance review conducted by: Dr Luke James.