

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Troon

Address: 746 Orrong Road, Toorak

HO Reference: HO744

Citation status: Final Date

Updated: 8 April 2022

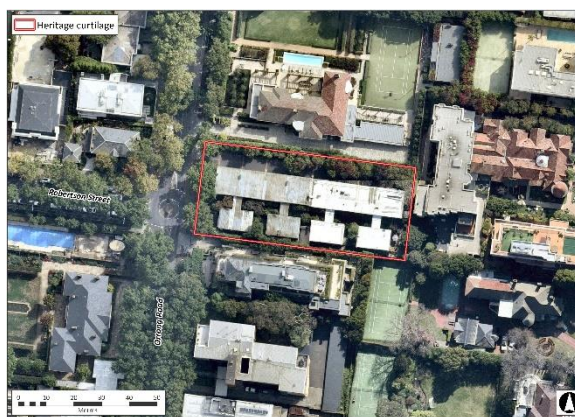
Designer: John & Phyllis Murphy

Year of Construction: 1961-1962

Builder: Unknown



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



Location map and extent of 746 Orrong Road, Toorak.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: Flat

Key Theme: Building suburbs

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

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Recommended as a new individually significant place on the HO; fence controls are recommended in relation to the original concrete brick boundary wall.

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 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 apartment block at 746 Orrong Road, Toorak, (otherwise known as Troon), is significant. Specifically, the built form, scale, fenestration, materiality, and mounted pressed metal stylised lion motif and original concrete brick boundary wall of the Post-war Modernist apartment block is of local significance. The landscaping and later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

Troon is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington. It also has associative significance as a design by the architectural partnership of married couple John and Phyllis Murphy.

Why is it significant?

Troon is historically significant to the City of Stonnington as a highly intact example of the historical growth in high-rise luxury apartment blocks in Toorak in the immediate post-war years. Prior to this, Toorak was characterised by remnant Victorian estates that were subdivided and re-developed at the turn of the 20th century through to the interwar years. The widespread development of architect designed high density apartments in the post-war era continued this subdivision trend. This phase of development not only altered the physical character of Toorak's streetscapes, but also changed the social make-up of the suburb by encouraging more single people to live within the area. (Criterion A)

Troon is aesthetically significant to the City of Stonnington as a well resolved and highly intact Post-war Modernist apartment block. Comprising of two bays constructed in exposed concrete bricks and joined by floating concrete and steel walkways, a flat roof with deep eaves shading floor-to-ceiling windows, undercroft carpark and matching concrete brick front boundary fence, Troon is distinguished by a harmonious, well-balanced, and clean aesthetic that embodies the key attributes associated with Post-war Modern apartment design. (Criterion E)

Troon has associative significance as a fine Post-war Modern apartment design by the architectural partnership of married couple John and Phyllis Murphy, who were recognised for their discreet and elegant interpretations of modernist design. Phyllis Murphy is also of particular note as one of the few influential female architects practicing in this idiom during the post-war era. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Troon is historically significant to the City of Stonnington as a highly intact example of the historical growth in high-rise luxury apartment blocks in Toorak in the immediate post-war years. Prior to this, Toorak was characterised by remnant Victorian estates that were subdivided and re-developed at the turn of the 20th century through to the interwar years. The widespread development of architect designed high density apartments in the post-war era continued this subdivision trend. This phase of development not only altered the physical character of Toorak's
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		streetscapes, but also changed the social make-up of the suburb by encouraging more single people to live within the area.
<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>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Troon is aesthetically significant to the City of Stonnington as a well resolved and highly intact Post-war Modernist apartment block. Comprising of two bays constructed in exposed concrete bricks and joined by floating concrete and steel walkways, a flat roof with deep eaves shading floor-to-ceiling windows, undercroft carpark and matching concrete brick front boundary fence , Troon is distinguished by a harmonious, well-balanced, and clean aesthetic that embodies the key attributes associated with Post-war Modern apartment design.
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<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.
<i>H</i>	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	Troon has associative significance as a fine Post-war Modern apartment design by the architectural partnership of married couple John and Phyllis Murphy, who were recognised for their discreet and elegant interpretations of modernist design. Phyllis Murphy is also of particular note as one of the

	few influential female architects practicing in this idiom during the post-war era.
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Description

- Physical Analysis

Troon is a three-storey multi-dwelling apartment building consisting of twenty-four apartments. Built during the post-war era it represents the modernist architectural approach to apartment design. The structure is constructed out of concrete bricks with a natural finish and has a flat roof clad with corrugated steel sheet metal. The roof profile is hidden behind a flush flat parapet. The rectilinear form of the complex consists of a main three storey structure with four two storey blocks interconnected by covered upper-level walkways extending from the southern elevation. The complex is set into a sloping site with an undercroft carpark at the ground level of the main three storey structure. The reinforced concrete columns and beams of the structure are exposed at the undercroft carpark.

The east elevation addresses Orrong Road, however the main external facing façade is located on the north face of the complex. The ground level of the north elevation includes the asphalt paved driveway edged with open face red bricks. The upper two levels are separated into four symmetrical bays. Each level consists of a centralised window wall with white aluminium framed windows. The windows consist of casement windows on the large upper panes and awning windows on the lower panes. The window wall is flanked by a verandah with steel balustrades. The upper-level verandah ceiling and roof overhang is lined with white timber boards. The party walls reflect the natural finished structural concrete bricks. The symmetrical bays present a strong rectilinear visual form accommodated by the sloping site.

The east and west elevations of the main structure lack fenestration. The street facing west elevation includes a wall mounted pressed metal stylised lion motif. The south elevation of the main structure includes the covered walkways, interspaced double casement windows and single awning windows.

The circulation space is located between the main structure and the adjacent two-storey blocks. A long, concrete paver laid pathway runs the length of the complex. It extends to the common stairs leading to the undercroft carpark and upper levels of the main structure to the left, and the adjacent blocks to the right. The upper-level covered walkways are aligned atop the side pathways. The walkways have a curved form that tapers at the centre and steel balustrades. The walkways are sheltered with a flat awning with a timber lined ceiling. The apartments in the adjacent blocks have private courtyard access on the ground level. Large windows with steel awnings are located on both levels along the east and west elevations of the adjacent blocks.

The street front boundary is demarcated by a stepped concrete brick wall which is likely to be original. The wall is broken at the centre to provide access to the main walkway and letterboxes. The main circulation area and open spaces are heavily underplanted with small trees and shrubs.

Troon is located on Orrong Road at the roundabout junction with Robertson Street, and its siting and orientation away from the intersection generate a sense of privacy and relative seclusion. The structure presents a strong rectilinear massing and detailing. The symmetrical structure and fenestration create a well-balanced and clean aesthetic that is characteristic of the Post-war Modernist style. Troon is currently used as a multi-dwelling residential apartment. It is considered to be in good condition. Apart

from a recent complete roof replacement, the structure and its features appear highly intact and would be considered with high integrity.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)
- Roof reclad with white steel sheet metal (after 2020).

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 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.

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- [Place History](#)

The land encompassing the present day Troon apartment block formerly comprised Lot 15 during the first 1840 Crown Land Sales. Situated along the desirable higher ground adjacent to the Yarra River, the area was immediately established as a desirable place for settlement (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 37). Claimed by the colony's upper classes, the Lot was further subdivided and founded as a residential enclave sparsely populated by mansions on large estates by the late 19th century. Accordingly, the 1905 MMBW map shows the mansions Darnlee, Heimath and Villa Vera immediately north of present day Troon (MMBW 1905). Meanwhile the lot comprising Troon consisted of undeveloped pastoral land, a cow shed and modest Victorian era building (MMBW 1905).

Following urban character changes during the interwar period, whereby land was rapidly subdivided and built upon, a substantial two-storey interwar residence situated on a generous allotment was erected on the grounds of present day Troon in 1918. Designed by the noted Arts and Crafts architect Harold

Desbrowe Annear, the residence was known as both Broceliande and Troon (Tibbits 1979). This dwelling was subsequently demolished in the post-war period, paving way for the development of the present-day Modernist apartment block, also known as Troon, by 1961.

Troon was constructed between 1961 and 1962 to designs by married couple and architectural partners John and Phyllis Murphy. While their early career was dominated by small projects including Modernist residential homes and additions to schools, they gained greater recognition following their work alongside architects Kevin Borland and Peter McIntyre in the design of the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Swimming Pool (Arts Victoria c.2010). Notably, Phyllis Murphy worked for two years at the noted architectural firm Yuncken Freeman Bros, Griffiths & Simpson in 1945-6, and was one of the two female graduates of architecture at the University of Melbourne in 1949 (Goad and Willis 2012, 481). As a result, she was one of the few practicing female architects of the post-war era, and the only one since noted Prairie style architect Marion Mahony Griffin to be involved in a public project as significant as the Olympic Swimming Pool (Standish 2014). The couple became increasingly involved in restoration and heritage work from the late 1950s, and their works from this period included the extensive restoration of Collingwood Town Hall in 1975. As a testament to Phyllis Murphy's influence beyond her partnership with John Murphy, she was awarded a life fellowship by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects' (RAIA) in 2009 for her achievements as 'one of a small number of women architects with significant involvement in the profession on the post World War II period' (RAIA 2009).

While the development of purpose-built flats were widespread across the municipality during the 1920s, post-war population growth, along with a pro-development Prahan Council in the 1950s, saw its rapid expansion into the 1960s and 1970s (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 146). Accordingly, the demolition of the Harold Desbrowe-Annear mansion was part of a larger cultural shift within Toorak – one that was not accepted well by some of the older Toorak families. This is best represented in 1962 in a publication known as The Bulletin:

'... But many a Reedy Swamp street has suffered from big flats. Grange Road has suffered. Orrong Road has suffered. Orrong Road has a nine-storey pile called Orrong Towers, which is so modern and glassy you would think it was put up by an oil company. Over the road there is Troon, three storeys, on the site of the once great Troon estate. There is balhomen at the corner of Struan and Hill Streets, once the home of Mr. M. L. Baillieu. Balhomen is now a seven-storey block of flats... For years now the motto in Toorak has been 'If you want to thrive subdivide', so that there are only six great estates left. Some of them are very obvious like the beautiful home of Dame Merlyn Myer in Clendon Road, but it would be an act of great inhumanity to name all the others. Most of the owners are not young and it would let loose a new wave of zealous estate men with subdivisions in their eyes...' (The Bulletin 1962).

The above excerpt highlights how the construction of flats in Toorak was considered to be an impingement on the old-world exclusivity of the suburb, and that modernity went hand in hand with gauche new money.

One of the rear apartments with a northern balcony was put on sale in 1989, and an advertisement describes the apartment as featuring 'gas heating in the living room, two double bedrooms with built-in robes, a well-fitted kitchen, tiled bathroom and shower recess...excellent laundry facilities, an under-

building car-port and a large storeroom (The Australian Jewish News 1989, 15). Today, Troon continues to remain in use as a private residential apartment block.

Comparative Analysis

Only five examples of the Murphys' designs are represented on any municipal heritage overlay, and the lack of representation of Post-war Modernist apartments in the Stonnington Heritage Overlays limits the range of potential comparators. As a result, this comparative analysis focuses on a comparable multi-residential by the architects as well as other comparable places designed by other prominent architects:

- **Maisonettes, 21 Redan Street, St Kilda (HO503)** The Maisonettes were designed by John and Phyllis Murphy and constructed in 1958. It is comparable with Troon as an example of the Murphy's Modernist flat-block design. It has been noted for its distinctive form, simplicity and economy of design, as well as its unusual planning comprising angled walls meeting at the centre. Key differences include the Maisonettes' recessed windows and emphasis on brick masonry, which differ from the striking floor-to-ceiling windows and use of concrete bricks at Troon. Ultimately, Troon stands as a more articulated example of their work, and not only observes a more complex form, proportion than the Maisonettes, but also embodies the Post-war Modernist propensity for concrete materials.
- **Clendon/Clendon Corner 13 and 15 Clendon Road, Armadale (HO130, individually significant)** Clendon Corner designed by Roy Grounds and constructed in 1940–41, are comparable to the Troon flats as a distinct example of Modernist flats block in the City of Stonnington. Both examples comprise two distinct rectilinear flat blocks running perpendicular with each other, joined by walkways. Both sites also share similar window designs, with recessed floor to ceiling glazing. With flat roof forms and an open plan design, Troon compares strongly both historically, marking the rise in Modernist style apartment development, as well as demonstrating the characteristics of the style, albeit at a later stage in its development. However, as an apartment block designed at an earlier period than Troon, Clendon Corner is more representative of the stripped-back neo-Georgian mode, as is evident in its symmetry and sense of formality.
- **Quamby, 3 Glover Court, Toorak (VHR H0603; HO44)** Quamby was designed by Roy Grounds in 1941 and is comparable to Troon as both examples are reflective of Modernist apartment development in the municipality. Clear differences include scale, with Quamby being a larger building, however both buildings observe similar aesthetic and physical characteristics including rectilinear form, and an emphasis on glazing, flat roof forms, deep eaves, and use of brick masonry.

As the above comparative analysis has shown, Troon is a notable example of a Post-war Modernist apartment block that compares well against existing examples included in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay, as well as with a similar example by John and Phyllis Murphy in the heritage overlay from an adjacent municipality.

References

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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



Southern bay façade as viewed from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of upper level southern bay fenestration (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



South-western view of the northern elevation and undercroft carpark (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail view of the undercroft carpark (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View of concrete and steel connecting walkway between the two and three storey blocks (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Letter box lining an entrance path (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



West facing street view of Troon from Orrong Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of concrete brick boundary fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Lion motif (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Staircase with walkway above (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Entrance to a ground level apartment (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Underside of concrete and steel connecting walkway (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

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