

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Salter House

Address: 16 and 16A Glyndebourne Avenue,
Toorak

Designer: Walter Burley Griffin and Marion
Mahony Griffin

Builder: Ernest Hamilton-Moore

HO Reference: HO266

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 5 April 2022

Year of Construction: 1923



Photograph of Salter House (source: realestate.com.au, 2021).



Location and map extent of HO266.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: House

Key Theme: Building suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – functional, eccentric and theatrical – experimentation and innovation in architecture

Significance Level: State

Recommendation: Retain as an individual place on the Heritage Overlay; recommended for the Victorian Heritage Register; tree controls recommended in relation to three mature eucalyptus (*eucalyptus*) trees at the 16 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, including a large lemon scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*).

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input checked="" 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 16 and 16A Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, (otherwise known as Salter House), is significant. Specifically, the form, siting, fenestration, materials and detailing of the Knitlock constructed interwar era residence is of state heritage significance. The three mature eucalyptus (*eucalyptus*) trees at the adjacent 16 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, including a large lemon scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*), comprise the former landscaped front garden and are contributory elements. The single storey house at 16 Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, along with the landscaping and later alterations and additions to 16A Glyndebourne Avenue, Toorak, are not significant.

How is it significant?

Salter House is of historical, representative and technical significance to the State of Victoria. It also has associative significance at the state level as a design by the highly influential and internationally renowned landscape architect and town planner Walter Burley Griffin.

Why is it significant?

Salter House is of state historical significance as an experimental residential design constructed during the interwar period. The dwelling was not only built using Griffin's signature Knitlock construction technique, but is also one of earliest examples of courtyard planning in domestic architecture. Regarded by experts as a seminal example of the development of the Australian house, the residence forms a tangible link to 20th century design innovation and experimentation in Victorian architectural history. (Criterion A)

Salter House is of state representative significance as a highly intact and outstanding example of both Griffin's patented Knitlock construction system and domestic oeuvre, and remains one of the most resolved examples of his domestic work. The building is distinguished by key attributes found in other Griffin designed Knitlock structures, including its near symmetrical floor plan, combination of low-pitched gable and shallow skillion roof forms, overhanging eaves, Knitlock concrete masonry, distinctive casement windows, clean lines and finely balanced proportions. Salter House also provides insight into Griffin's work as a skilled landscape practitioner and signature incorporation of Australian plantings, having retained its deep sitting and three mature gum trees that were part of the original landscape design. (Criterion D)

Salter House is of state technical significance as the most intact and distinguished example of Griffin's patented Knitlock technique. Comprising an interlocking modular construction system based on prefabricated reinforced concrete, brick or roof cladding materials that were fitted on site. This method not only allowed for flexible construction, but provided a means to erect affordable and high quality houses. Salter House is a highly intact exemplar of this technique, incorporating both the Knitlock roof and 3'6" (three foot six inch) wall system. Salter House is also distinguished from Griffin's other Knitlock designs in its sophisticated incorporation of a central internal courtyard, which also made it one of the earliest examples of courtyard planning in domestic design in Australia. (Criterion F)

Salter House has associative significance as a notable and experimental residential design by the highly influential and internationally renowned architect and town planner Walter Burley Griffin, and prominent artist and one of the first licensed female architects, Marion Mahony Griffin. (Criterion H)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Salter House is of state historical significance as an experimental residential design constructed during the interwar period. The dwelling was not only built using Griffin's signature Knitlock construction technique, but is also one of earliest examples of courtyard planning in domestic architecture. Regarded by experts as a seminal example of the development of the Australian house, the residence forms a tangible link to 20th century design innovation and experimentation in Victorian architectural history.
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>	Salter House is of state representative significance as a highly intact and outstanding example of both Griffin's patented Knitlock construction system and domestic oeuvre, and remains one of the most resolved examples of his domestic work. The building is distinguished by key attributes found in other Griffin designed Knitlock structures, including its near symmetrical floor plan, combination of low-pitched gable and shallow skillion roof forms, overhanging eaves, Knitlock concrete masonry, distinctive casement windows, clean lines and finely balanced proportions. Salter House also provides insight into Griffin's work as a skilled landscape practitioner and signature incorporation of Australian plantings, having retained its deep sitting and three mature gum trees that were part of the original landscape design.
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>	Salter House is of state technical significance as the most intact and distinguished example of Griffin's patented Knitlock technique. Comprising an interlocking modular construction system based on prefabricated reinforced concrete, brick or roof cladding materials that were fitted on site. This method not only allowed for flexible construction, but provided a means to erect affordable and high quality houses. Salter House is a highly intact exemplar of this technique, incorporating both the Knitlock roof and 3'6" (three foot six inch) wall system. Salter House is also distinguished from Griffin's other Knitlock designs in its sophisticated incorporation of a central internal courtyard, which also made it one of the earliest examples of courtyard planning in domestic design in Australia.
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>	Salter House has associative significance as a notable and experimental residential design by the highly influential and internationally renowned architect and town planner Walter Burley Griffin, and prominent artist and one of the first licensed female architects, Marion Mahony Griffin.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Salter House is a single storey residence constructed using the Knitlock concrete masonry construction technique. Knitlock is a cladding and construction system devised by Walter Burley Griffin consisting of prefabricated reinforced concrete, and brick or roof cladding panels reinforced with a dual internal 'vertebrae' supporting structure. The modular system allowed for a cheaper and flexible method of construction. The Knitlock masonry blocks are finished with paint. The complex hipped roof is also clad with Knitlock cement roof tiles in a diamond pattern. The roof form is expressed over the open gable elevations of the structure with a deep overall overhang lined with white plaster. A central main gable is located along the front façade. Two open gables extend over the south elevation at the rear.

The residence is centred around an enclosed courtyard laid out within the three foot and six-inch (1.06 metre) module that forms the near symmetrical floorplan. The residence includes five intersecting room bays. Four of the bays are roofed with a low-pitched gable form and a smaller shallow skillion roof at the rear of the residence. A distinctive fireplace in the lounge room is expressed as a major massing element on the front elevation and projects above the roof. The internal spaces are laid out with the open 'public' spaces located along the front of the residence. The private bedroom spaces are located at the rear of the residence, with the kitchen and courtyard forming a visual barrier and transitional spatial area. Generous windows and doors throughout the residence provides ample natural light. The fenestration is timber framed with glazing bars in a chevron pattern finished paint. Internal timber joinery and wall mouldings reflect the chevron fenestration pattern.

Salter House is set within a landscaped subdivided into a battleaxe block. The driveway and main entrance are located along the west boundary from Glyndebourne Avenue. The lane leads to a small pond located beside the residence and a path leading to the north and west yards. A raised timber deck is located along the east elevation of the residence. A second open patio area is located along the west elevation. The pathways and patio areas are clad with flagstone Castlemaine slate pavers. Interspaced between the patio and deck spaces are in ground garden beds underplanted with indigenous plants. Several mature trees are located around the residence, including a number of eucalyptus trees.

The subdivided block includes a single storey masonry house at 16 Glyndebourne Avenue, utilising the north section of the site. The residence was built in the 1990s and includes continuous timber framed fenestration and a shallow pitched Colorbond clad roof. The landscape at 16 Glyndebourne Avenue is visually cohesive with the setting of the Salter House and includes a large lemon scented gum (*Corymbia citriodora*) in the front yard. The street front boundary of the site consists of a low open face brick and bluestone block wall, and chainlink and post fence.

Salter House is currently used as a residential property. It is considered to be in good condition and has high integrity.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

- Property subdivided (1995-96)
- Single storey residence built on the north subdivided lot (1995)
- Timber deck added along the east elevation of 16A Glyndebourne Avenue (after 2017)
- Skylights added to the roof of 16A Glyndebourne Avenue.
- Driveway relandscaped to include steps (after 2014)
- 16A Glyndebourne Avenue finished with a white paint repainted with a grey paint (after 2017)
- Original swimming pool at the southwestern corner of the property covered and converted into a water tank (after 2017).
- Formal hard landscaping removed (2018)
- Full internal refurbishment of 16A Glyndebourne Avenue (2018)
- Internal floor and subfloor structure replaced at 16A Glyndebourne Avenue (2018)

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 encompassing present day 16 and 16A Glyndebourne Avenue formerly comprised Lot 19 during the 1840 Crown Land Sales. Consisting of well-drained high land ground overlooking the Yarra River to the north and also in close proximity to the village of Melbourne, this area was readily established as a desirable place for settlement (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 37). Within this context, this broader region that would later become Toorak was immediately acquired by the colony's wealthy and influential during the early land sales. Thus, in 1841, the 131 acres of well drained land comprising both Lot 19 and Lot 20 was purchased by land speculator William Gosling for £1625 (Foster 1994, 8). Gosling subsequently sold his allotments to prominent pastoralist Thomas Herbert Power in 1851 at a substantial loss during the economic slump prior to the gold rush (Foster 1994, 8).

Power subdivided this area into large pastoral allotments in the years following his 1851 purchase, while retaining a substantial piece of land in the area roughly bounded by present day Toorak Road, Moonga Road, Glenbervie Road and the railway line (MMBW 1907). With this, the land west of Moonga Road was subdivided and sold off and, by 1857, the nine acres of land comprising present day 16 and 16A Glyndebourne Avenue was purchased by Western District squatter John Quarterman (Foster 1994, 13). Quarterman soon erected a modest villa of five rooms with a detached kitchen, stone cellar and stables, and the Glyndebourne Avenue area encompassed the grounds of Quarterman's nine acre estate. This villa was eventually demolished when John Gurner purchased the property in 1905 and replaced the existing dwelling with a two-storey building named Glyndebourne designed by architect William Blackett.

The most substantial changes to the area, however, came during the interwar period in 1917 when Gurner subdivided and sold off land which was part of the Glyndebourne residence as the Glyndebourne Heights Estate (Always 1917). Although the subdivision of large estates was taking place as well 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 a period of intense subdivision and development across the municipality, which saw key urban character changes in the form of newly formed streets and the subsequent erection of grand architect designed homes situated on generous allotments. Within this context, the allotment that would later become 16/16A Glyndebourne Avenue was purchased by warehouseman Stanley R. Salter in 1922 (Graeme Butler & Associates 2002; Sands & McDougall 1925).

A modernist Knitlock villa was subsequently erected in 1923 by builder Ernest Hamilton-Moore to designs by the prominent and influential Prairie school architects and married couple Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin (MMBW 1923). Otherwise known as 'segmental architecture', 'Knitlock' comprised an innovative modular concrete construction technique based on machines for cheap manufacture, lightness and compactness for minimising transport, as well as speedy erection (Griffin 1927, 14; Lewis). Rooted in affordability and engineering principles for economy of design, the method saw the employment of bricks made from just three different machines. Reflecting the principles of efficiency and rationalism underpinning it, the use of this technique at the Salter house was initially met with resistance from the Malvern Council who were dubious over the suitability of the technique to the wealthy suburb of Toorak (Lewis 2013, 97). At a broader level, the construction technique provided a technical solution to a social problem at a time whereby there was a shortage of affordable and quality housing. In 1927, Salter wrote a letter for publication in the booklet 'Segmental Reinforced Concrete Construction', promoting Knitlock construction. He discussed his residency in his Knitlock house, then called Burley, and noted how well it had performed, stating it had cost only a little more than timber (Salter 1927). Moreover, the interior decoration by the Griffins had proved to be 'beautiful' and durable; it had none of the dampness of brick in winter and cooled quickly during summer. Despite ongoing efforts to promote the technique as a cheap form of construction for general use, other architects did not pursue it further, and its users were ultimately limited to Griffin and his immediate associates (Lewis 2013, 98). Other key elements underpinning its original design include a natural landscape setting defined by native plantings, highlighting the Griffins' propensity for Australian flora and fauna.

Salter resided at the residence for just over two decades, and by around 1947, the residence was purchased by Dr. Norman Dodd (Prahan Rate Books, 1947; Graeme Butler & Associates 2002). Dodd subsequently sold the house to surgeon Dr William McCann, for £21,250 during a time when the National Trust of Australia feared it would be replaced by flats. Notably, it was regarded by noted Australian architect James Birrell in 1964 as being 'more important to the development of Australian domestic architecture than any other house in the country' (Birrell 1964). By 1968, the house was owned by Dr Frederik Hocking and the existing garage was converted into a rumpus room using designs by architect Leslie Seward (Graeme Butler & Associates 2002).

A key change to the residence's landscape took place in 1995, when a second single storey dwelling designed by architect Bruce Kirkman was constructed north of Salter House directly fronting

Glyndebourne Avenue. With this, Salter House was re-numbered to 16A Glyndebourne Avenue. Salter House was sold several times in the early 21st century, with the most recent sale being in 2021.

Today, it continues to be used as a private residence.

Comparative Analysis

As an experimental and aesthetically impressive design distinguished by Walter Burley Griffin's signature Knitlock construction technique, Salter House is considered a cornerstone of Australian architecture. Radical for its time, the residence encapsulates key elements associated with the Griffins' design approach, including Knitlock masonry, a low pitched roof with exaggerated overhangs encompassing the Prairie School movement, projecting gables clad with diamond patterned flat cement shingles, casement windows with glazing bars. It is also one of the earliest examples of a house with a central courtyard garden layout in 20th century Australia. Today, few of the Griffins' Knitlock constructed houses survive, and none are as noteworthy in plan form when compared to the Salter House. Moreover, those that do survive are located outside of the City of Stonnington municipality. As a result, the following comparative analysis draws from other Griffin designed Knitlock residences located across Victoria.

Comparative examples include:

- **Former Wills House (5 Dickens Street, Woodend) (HO65 Macedon Ranges Shire; VHR H1221).** Constructed in 1923-24 to designs by Walter Burley Griffin, the former Wills House is directly comparable to the Salter House as an interwar era residence constructed using Griffin's signature Knitlock system. Beyond the Knitlock construction, other key comparative features also include its sophisticated geometrical planning and sense of symmetry, use of diagonal-shaped roofing tiles cladding sloping roofs, and timber framed casement windows. Unlike Salter House, however, the roof forms consist of two pyramidal hipped roofs and central flat roof sections as opposed to four low pitched gable roofs and one shallow skillion roof at the rear. Moreover, it lacks the chevron pattern glazing bars that characterise the windows at Salter House. It is of noticeably poorer condition than the Salter House, and currently survives in a ruinous state.
- **Jefferies House (7 Warwick Avenue, Surrey Hills) (HO136 Boroondara City; VHR H0461).** Also of state significance, this 1924 Marino Mahony Griffin designed house similarly comprises the discernible Knitlock roof tile and wall system demonstrated at Salter House. Of particular note is the chevron pattern glazing bars on the timber framed casement windows, a feature which is almost like-for-like to the fenestration at Salter House. It is less articulated and complex than the Salter House in terms of composition, and does not comprise the arrangement of intersecting room bays arranged around a central courtyard that defines Salter House. On the other hand, it comprises a single fronted symmetrical building with a strong square form and hipped roof.
- **Murray Griffin House (52 Darebin Street, Heidelberg) (HO24 Banyule City; VHR H1324).** Designed by Walter Burley Griffin in c.1922 as a six roomed residence constructed using the Knitlock system, the Murray Griffin House observes many of the same elements as Salter House, including the use of distinct overhanging eaves, casement windows with chevron pattern glazing bars, siting in response to natural landscape features, as well as the use of a modular plan. There are a number of key differences however, such as its overall arrangement and pyramidal roof

form clad with Marseilles pattern tiles. Of the two, Salter House is more intact and resolved in terms of its internal courtyard and arrangement of intersecting room bays.

As demonstrated in the above comparative analysis, Salter House is not only the best preserved of Griffin's collection of state significant Knitlock houses, but also the most orchestrated in terms of its arrangement of intersecting room bays and incorporation of a central courtyard. With this, it is a highly important building not only the City of Stonnington but also the state of Victoria more broadly.

References

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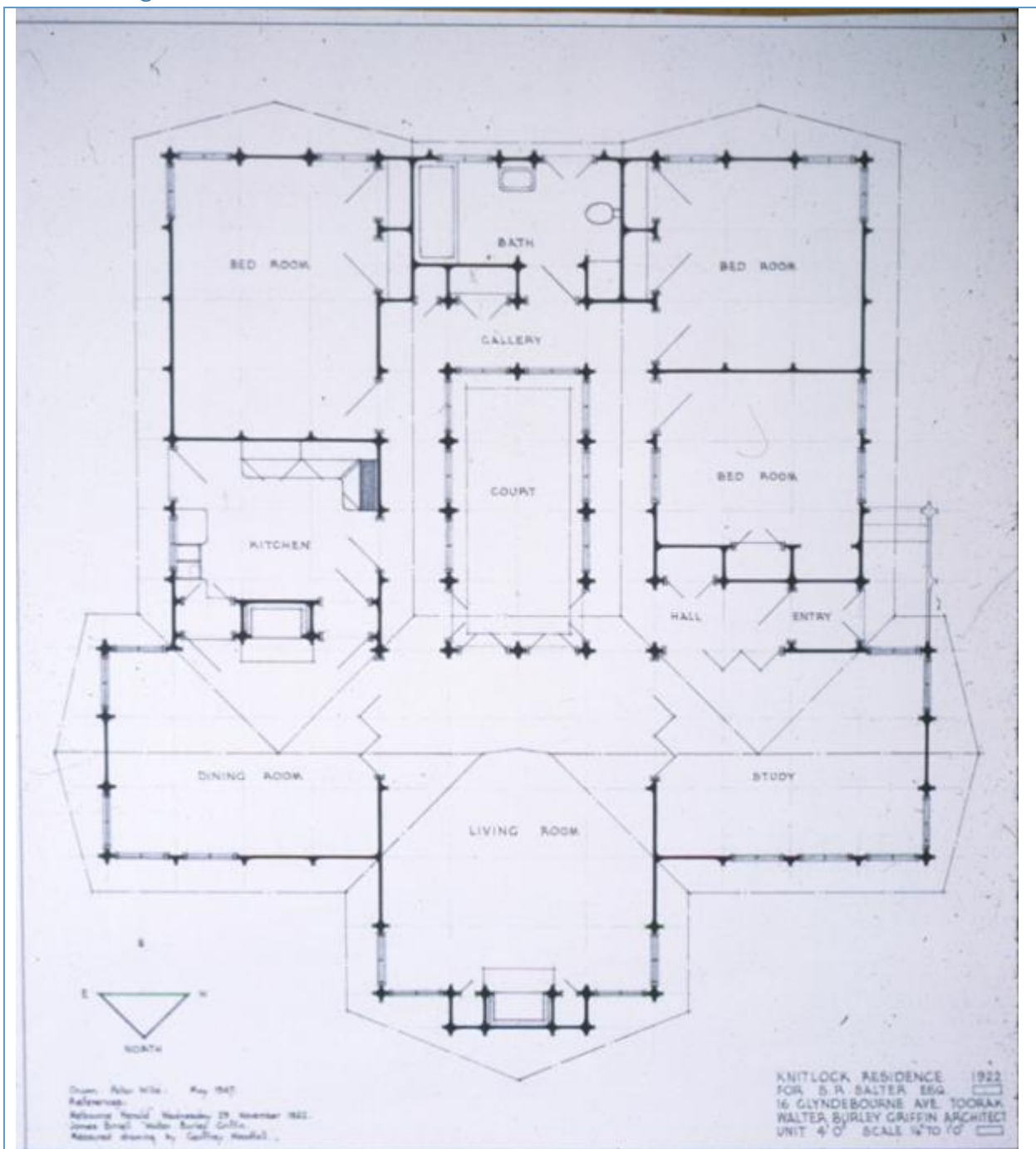
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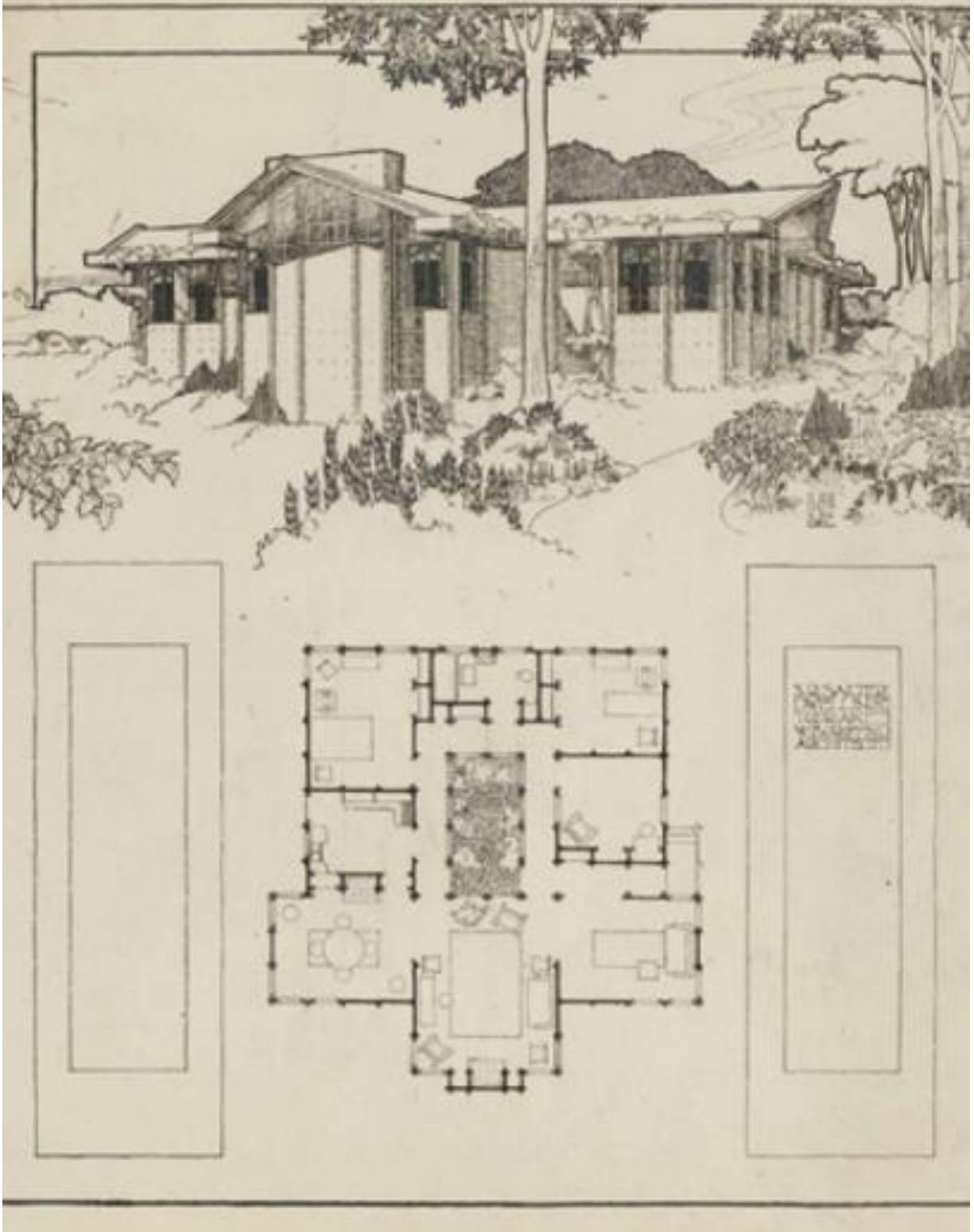
Limitations

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



Measured drawing of Salter House by Geoffrey Woodfall (source: Peter Wille, 1967).



Sketch of Salter House (source: The Heritage Council of Victoria. 2021. 'Case Study: Former Salter House.' Unpublished report prepared for Heritage Victoria).



c.1922-1927 image of Salter House (source: National Library of Australia).



1976 image of Salter House (source: Wolfgang Sievers, State Library of Victoria).



Street front view of 1995 16 Glyndebourne Avenue and remnant mature gum trees (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Street front view of Salter House (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Partial view of Salter House roof (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



Partial view of Salter House roof (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022).



South-east facing view of Salter House (source: Domain, 2021).



North facing view of Salter House west elevation and landscaping (non-original) (source: Domain, 2021).



View of west elevation (source: Heritage Council of Victoria, 2021).



Central enclosed courtyard (source: Heritage Council of Victoria, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Graeme Butler & Associates, 2002.

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.