

2.4 East St Kilda: Holroyd Court Precinct

Existing Designations:

Heritage Council Register:	nil
National Estate Register:	nil
National Trust Register:	nil

History: Holroyd Court occupies land which once formed part of *Fernacres*, the vast estate of prominent Melbourne barrister, Justice Edward Dundas Holroyd, which extended from the south-western corner of Alma Road and Orrong Road. The house itself, erected c.1867, was set well back from these main roads. The huge property was inevitably subdivided in the early twentieth century, creating several other new streets including the eponymous Holroyd Avenue. The mansion, however, was retained on a large allotment extending between Lansdowne Road and the L-shaped intersection of Holroyd Avenue. It was finally demolished in 1936 and, as indicated on Lodged Plan No 14174, the large block was carved up into eight standard-sized residential allotments: four rectangular blocks fronting Lansdowne Street, and the four wedge-shaped blocks clustered around a new *cul-de-sac*, Holroyd Court, which projected westwards from the L-shaped intersection of Holroyd Avenue.

The four blocks fronting Holroyd Court (designated as Lots 5, 6, 7 and 8) were initially purchased by Albert Burgess, an investor. At least two were then acquired by Chaddesley Pty Ltd, a firm of property developers who worked extensively in the East St Kilda area at that time. Although no architect has been conclusively linked with the Holroyd Court development, it is known that Chaddesley Pty Ltd invariably engaged Gordon & Bruce Sutherland as their designers; it has been pointed out that the house at No 2 Holroyd Court is markedly similar to another at No 2 Lockerbie Court, East St Kilda (within the City of Glen Eira) that is known to have been designed by the Sutherlands.

Holroyd Court first appears in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* in 1939, with listings for new dwellings at Nos 1 and 2-3 - respectively "flats" occupied by Henry Haskin and a duplex occupied by Rex Oldham and James Reed. The following year saw the appearances of a second duplex at Nos 4-5 (occupied by Maurice Hallam and David Braddish) and second block of flats at No 7 (subsequently co-occupied by Lewis Kiel). Electoral rolls indicate that these original residents of Holroyd Court were typically middle-class white-collar professionals - citing occupations such as clerks, managers, and a manufacturer. Directories indicate that only three of these original occupants - Kiel, Oldham and Braddish - were still living in Holroyd Court in the mid-1940s.

Description: Holroyd Court comprises four double-storey dwellings clustered around a shallow *cul-de-sac*. The buildings, all erected within the space of a few years, are consistent in scale, composition, materials and roof form, yet are otherwise diverse in their finishes and detailing. The flats at No 1 and No 6-7, for example, are both in the Moderne idiom, with curved corners and steel-framed multi-paned windows, although one (No 1) is rendered and the other is in face clinker brick. The duplex dwelling at No 2-3 also has clinker brickwork, but with a projecting brick stringcourses, toothed quoining, and a rendered sunhood and timber-framed double-hung windows. No 4-5 has tapestry brick walls with wide rendered banding and steel-framed landscape windows with casement sashes and sloping rendered sills.

All four properties retain original detached garages at the rear, and have the same type of front fence: a low dwarf wall of irregular stonework. Holroyd Court itself has a wide nature strip with mature deciduous trees, and the front gardens of the houses have low plantings and trees (such as Silver Birches) typical of the period.

References:

MMBW Plan No 46 (c.1903)

Sands and McDougall Directory (various).

Miles Lewis and Terry Sawyer, *Melbourne Mansions Database*. On-line publication.

Lodged Plan No 14174, declared 6 August 1936.

Information provided by Robin Grow and David Thompson, Art Deco Society, Inc.

Thematic Context: Building settlements, towns and cities:

? Planning urban settlement

? Making suburbs

Comparative Analysis: Residential developments such as this were quite common in Melbourne's more affluent suburbs during the inter-War period, when large Victorian residences were demolished and their sites carved up to form wedge-shaped allotments around short *cul-de-sacs*. Within what is now the City of Port Phillip, these *cul-de-sac* developments were rare, if not entirely unknown, in Port Melbourne, South Melbourne and Middle Park, but quite common in St Kilda and Elwood. There are only a few examples in East St Kilda, and these are mostly located within the boundaries of the adjacent municipality, the City of Glen Eira, such as Lockerbie Court (developed from 1935)

Amongst the documented examples in the City of Port Phillip, there is a degree of consistency in the built fabric in terms of form, scale and materials - typically, double-storey blocks of flats or duplex dwellings in a loosely Moderne or Art Deco style, being of face brick construction with hipped roofs of terracotta tile. In some examples, such as Eildon Court in St Kilda (1940) and Southey Court in Elwood (1943), the dwellings tend to be somewhat stark and austere, with plain brickwork, little specific stylistic influence, and a minimum of decorative detail. The individual buildings in Holroyd Court, by contrast, are more considered in terms of their materials and detailing, making use of clinker brick, tapestry bricks, rendered banding, curved or toothed corners and other embellishments. In this regard, Holroyd Court is most comparable to contemporaneous developments at Garden Court (1936) and Avoca Court (1939), both in Elwood, which exhibit similar diversity in their decorative detailing.

Holroyd Court notably retains all of its original front fences (in the form of dwarf walling), some original garages, and mature street trees. Of the examples cited above, only Avoca Court is truly comparable in this respect. The front fences in Eildon Court have been altered by the addition of tall pickets, and those in Garden Court have been removed or, in one case, recently rebuilt in an entirely unsympathetic contemporary style.

Statement of Significance:*What is Significant?*

The Holroyd Court Precinct comprises four double-storey inter-war Moderne-style duplex dwellings, designated as Nos 1, 2-3, 4-5 and 6-7, which are arranged around a squat *cul-de-sac*.

How is it Significant?

The Holroyd Court Precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it Significant?

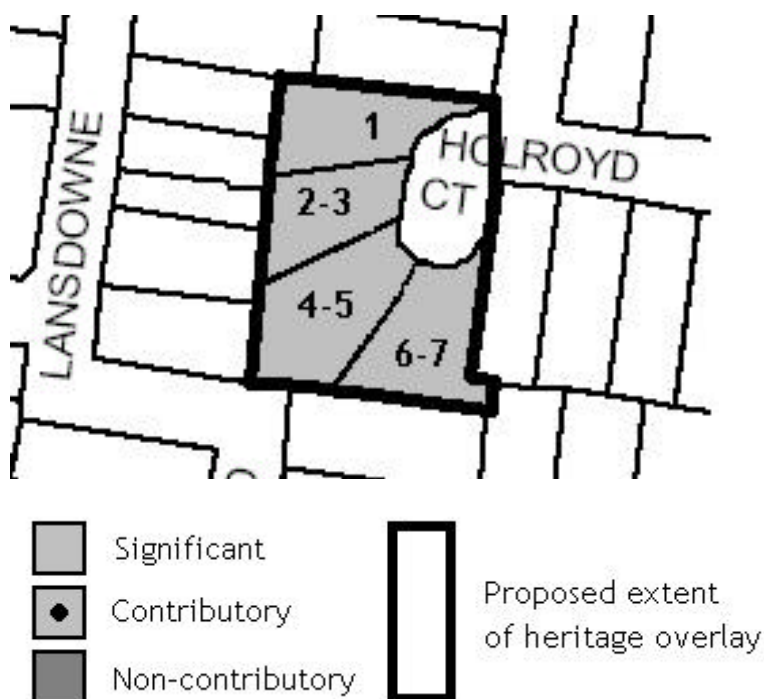
Historically, Holroyd Court marks the location of the last remaining remnant of *Fernacres*, home of the eponymous E D Holroyd, a prominent Melbourne barrister whose vast estate once extended to the corner of Alma and Orrong roads, which was demolished c.1936. Holroyd Court, which subsequently developed within only a year or two of subdivision, remains as an extremely intact example of a respectable middle-class *cul-de-sac* housing

estate of the late 1930s. Residential developments of this type, while quite common in St Kilda and Elwood, are considerably rarer in other parts of the municipality. While comparable examples can be found in those portions of East St Kilda that are within the adjacent City of Glen Eira, Holroyd Court is unique in the portion within the City of Port Phillip.

Aesthetically, the row of four Moderne-style double-storeyed brick duplex houses and flats in Holroyd Court are notable for their cohesion in terms of scale, materials and form, while still displaying a degree of diversity in finishes, fenestration and detailing. This aesthetic significance is enhanced by the survival of original detached garages, low stone front fences, and mature street trees, all typical of the Garden Suburb movement of the 1930s.

Recommendations: Buildings, front fences and street trees recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

Assessment: Simon Reeves, Heritage Alliance. June 2004.



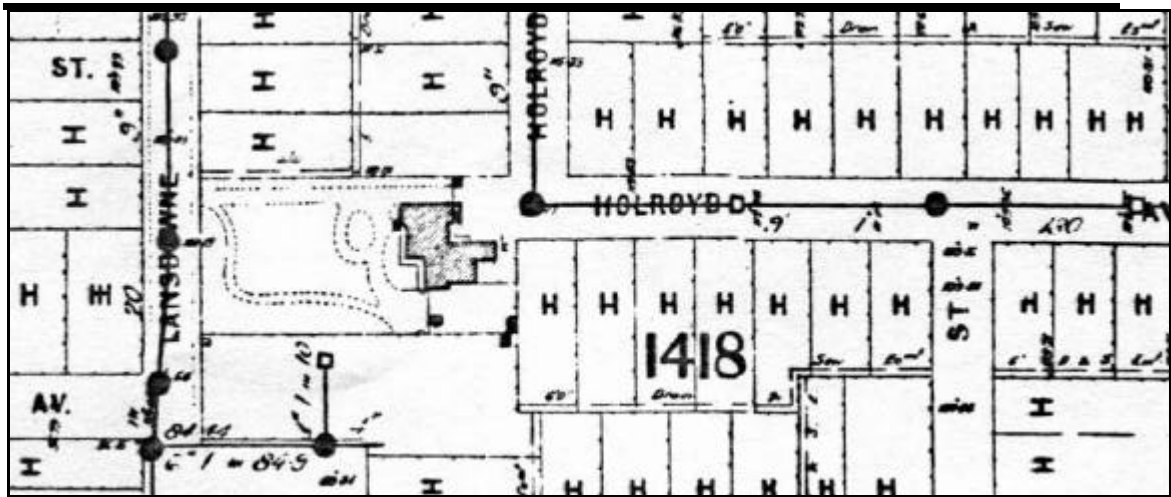


Figure 1 Detail of MMBW Plan (c.1903) showing *Fernacres* estate on site of Holroyd Court



Figure 2 General view of Holroyd Court



Figure 3 Flats, No 1 Holroyd Crt (c.1938)



Figure 4 Duplex, 2-3 Holroyd Crt (1938)



Figure 5 Duplex, 4-5 Holroyd Crt (1939)



Figure 6 Flats, 6-7 Holroyd Court (c.1939)



Figure 7 General View of Holroyd Court