
CLUB SECRETARY'S HOUSE (FORMER) & GARDEN



MVRC Club Secretary's House (Former) and garden



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Location

cnr. MCPHERSON STREET and THOMAS STREET, MOONEE PONDS, MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Municipality

MOONEE VALLEY CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO379

Heritage Listing

Moonee Valley City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The former Club Secretary's House, situated at the northwest corner of the Moonee Valley Racecourse, adjacent to the corner of Thomas and McPherson Streets, designed by the architect, E.F. Billson, and built in 1937 is significant. The two-storey brick house is designed in a hybrid style of Moderne (Art Deco) and Modern detailing. The mature garden setting, generally laid out in accordance with a plan by eminent garden designer Edna Walling, and the perimeter brick wall, are also significant.

How is it significant?

The former Club Secretary's House and its garden and perimeter brick wall are of aesthetic, architectural and historic significance to City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

The former Club Secretary's House is historically and architecturally significant as a residence purpose-built for racecourse officials, built as one of a number of works to modernise the racecourse during the Inter-war period. The Club Secretary's House is notable as the most intact of these works. It is of historical significance for its association with the Cox family, and for its use as the Club Secretary's House. Although it is situated away from the main complex of buildings, its connection with the racecourse is demonstrated by the orientation of its primary (east) facade towards the course, with its racing-themed details and its balconies. (Criteria A, D & H)

The former Club Secretary's House and garden is aesthetically significant as a fine example of an inter-war house and garden. The house is an example of the transitory character of design by the mid 1930s, where buildings were influenced by the arrival of Modernism in Australia only a few years before. However, this Modernist style is diluted with styles, forms and detailing that are more traditional in the Australian context. In this instance, due to the deep eaves of the house and its recessive low-pitched hip roof, from many vantage points it appears to have a flat roof. This characteristic, combined with its cubic massing and strips of steel frame windows on the ground floor, make the Modernist influence more dominant in the design. The garden designed by Edna Walling is notable for the distinctive built and landscape elements that are typical of the work of Walling. The semi-formal layout with defined 'rooms' and features such as the stone pathways, steps and low garden walls, plantings including some 'blossom trees' (Crab Apples, *Malus sp.*) along the south boundary, 'evergreens' (Lilly Pilly, *Acmena smithii* or *Syzygium leuhmannii*) along the west boundary, and two large Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) on the east lawn all enclosed by a high brick wall is characteristic of Walling's work. An inter-war house and garden of this quality is uncommon in this part of Melbourne, and more akin to the house and gardens designed for the wealthy in Toorak and South Yarra. (Criterion E)

The former Club Secretary's House is historically significant as an example of the work of the architect E.F. Billson. Billson had a prolific career, and in addition to Club Secretary's House and other structures built at Moonee Valley, he is recognized as one of the foremost exponents of Moderne architecture in Melbourne. The associated garden is historically significant as an example of the work of the important garden designer Edna Walling (1896-1973). Walling had a prolific career throughout Victoria, and this is the only known example of her work in the City of Moonee Valley. (Criterion H)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Moonee Valley - Moonee Valley Racecourse Heritage Assessment, David Helms Heritage Planning & Management, 2012;
Construction dates	1938,
Architect/Designer	Walling, Edna, Wagstaff, H.J.,
Other Names	Moonee Valley Racecourse, Moonee Valley Racing Club,
Hermes Number	184585
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

This house is situated at the south-east corner of Thomas and McPherson street adjacent to the Members' car park. The dwelling has quite a recessive character in relation to both the racecourse and neighbouring streets, as it is concealed on all sides by a high brick fence and a mature garden.

The house is a substantial brick dwelling built in 1937 to the design of the architect, H J Wagstaff. The two-storey brick house is designed in a hybrid style of Moderne (Art Deco) and Modern detailing, which is not uncommon in the mid-late 1930s, a transitory period of Australian Architecture. However, due to its deep eaves and its recessive low-pitched hip roof, from many vantage points it appears to have a flat roof. This characteristic, combined with its cubic massing and strips of steel frame windows on the ground floor, make the Modernist influence more dominant in the design. Also of note is that the west (street-facing) elevation is more restrained in detailing than the east elevation, which is orientated to the racecourse.

Internally, the planning of the house is relatively formal, however there are some free-flowing spaces in living areas. The interior contains some original features including a stair that retains its original balustrade (which includes what is believed to be a 'Caslake' wrought iron handrail), and sliding doors that are recessed into wall cavities. The original fireplace in the lounge is believed to be extant, but is currently concealed by a panel.

The setting of the house is enhanced by the mature garden, which is attributed to the eminent landscape designer, Edna Walling. The garden is semi-formal in layout and comparison with plans prepared by Walling (See History) show that several key features were implemented, as follows:

- The pathway leading from the gateway in the east fence to house.
- The 'sunken lawn', enclosed by a dwarf stone fence on the north and east sides
- Plantings including some 'blossom trees' (Crab Apples, *Malus sp.*) along the south boundary, 'evergreens' (Lilly Pilly, *Acmena smithii* or *Syzygium leuhmannii*) along the west boundary, and two large Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) on the east lawn.
- Other stone fences and pathways.

A high brick wall encloses the garden. There is an arched entrance gateway with a wrought iron gate in the McPherson Street elevation. Adjacent to the entrance are the words 'Moonee Valley' in wrought iron script. Part of the wall along the McPherson Street boundary has been reconstructed (Possibly as the result of tree damage) and the wall along the north boundary and the splayed corner is also not original, though of similar detailing to the original wall.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

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