

Selkirk House



Figure 1 Revised sketch plan for the Selkirk House, undated but circa November December 1960.jpg



Figure 2 Presentation perspective of street frontage, undated but circa November December 1960.jpg



Figure 3 Presentation perspective of pool courtyard, undated but circa November December 1960.jpg



Figure 5 Views of the living room interior, circa August 2013.jpg



Figures 4 Views of the exterior of the house from Wendouree Parade, September 2014.jpg



Figures 4a Views of the exterior of the house from Wendouree Parade, September 2014.jpg

Location

436 WENDOUREE PARADE, LAKE WENDOUREE - PROPERTY NUMBER 2034846, BALLARAT CITY

Municipality

BALLARAT CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO196

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 29, 2024

What is significant?

The former Selkirk House at 436 Wendouree Parade, Ballarat, is a large flat-roofed two-storey brick house, with the habitable rooms concentrated on the elevated upper level while carparking spaces and a utility area occupying the undercroft below. Designed by Robin Boyd, the house was commissioned and occupied by businessmen Robert Selkirk, the third generation of a prominent local family that established the eponymous brickworks in Howitt Street in 1900.

How is it significant?

The house is of architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Ballarat

Why is it significant?

Architecturally the house is significant as a notable example of the residential work of Robin Boyd, one of Australia's best-known and most celebrated modernist architects (*Criterion H*). While the house is rare as the only example of Boyd's work in Ballarat (and one of only a few Boyd buildings in Victoria's western district), it is significant in its own right for its ability to illustrate a number of themes that recurred in the architect's residential work of the 1950s and '60s, including the courtyard plan, the bold articulation as an elevated volume with recessed undercroft and its expressive use of face brickwork (*Criterion E*). The last of these is particularly pertinent, in that the house was designed for a leading firm of brick manufacturers and, as such, was clearly intended to be something of a showpiece for the company's products (*Criterion C*).

In a broader architectural sense, the house is also significant as one of a relatively small number of high-end architect-designed houses to be built in Ballarat in the 1950s and '60s (*Criterion B*). Modernist residential architecture was evidently slow to arrive in post-war Ballarat, with the earliest examples (and the Selkirk House itself) being commissioned by high-powered local businessmen. With the demolition of Ballarat's first flat-roofed modernist post-war house (at 1805 Sturt Street), and the comprising of the setting of a slightly later one at 109 Wendouree Parade, the former Selkirk House remains as an important early survivor of the emergence of post-war modernist residential architecture in Ballarat (*Criterion F*).

Aesthetically, the house is significant as a textbook example of early 1960s residential design (*Criterion E*). It displays many of the qualities that characterised fine contemporary dwellings of that era, including its elevated expression, its generous fenestration with large metal-framed windows, its open planning and, internally, its sprayed Vermiculite ceilings with exposed beams, brick feature walls, built-in furniture and open fireplace with tapering copper hood. Subject to only minor alterations (such as the installation of powder-coated metal gates), the substantially intact house remains one of the most striking and evocative examples of 1960s residential architecture in Ballarat (*Criterion F*).

References

Norman Houghton, *A Century of Country Clay: Selkirk, the first 100 years, 1883-1983*.

Certificate of Title, Volume 4966, Folio 993184, created 13 August 1924.

Grounds, Romberg & Boyd Archive, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library of Victoria.

Information provided by Tony Lee, Robin Boyd Foundation.

Prepared by

Simon Reeves, Built Heritage Pty Ltd

2 October 2014

Construction dates 1963,

Architect/Designer Boyd, Robin,

Hermes Number 197839

Property Number

Physical Description 1

Description

The former Selkirk House is a two-storey brick dwelling that is expressed as a large flat-roofed volume (containing the principal rooms) elevated above the ground to create an undercroft (providing semi-enclosed carparking spaces with a central utility area). Laid out on a C-shaped plan, the main floor level incorporates a central courtyard with a covered in-ground swimming pool. The elongated street facade is symmetrical, with a flight of open-tread steps that leads up to a central recessed entry porch, flanked by continuous bays of large metal-framed fixed and sliding windows. The flat roof, clad with metal decking, has broad fascias and narrow eaves with exposed beams to the side elevations. The upper level projects outward over the lower level, where the central flight of steps is flanked by two double-width carport openings, now screened by powder-coated metal gates (not original). There is a semi-circular brick-paved driveway, defined by low brick walls with tiled capping. A taller brick fence, similar capped, runs along the street boundary, with two driveway entrances that have non-original powder-coated metal gates.

The interior of the house appears to retain many original finishes and features. Ceilings have the distinctive rough-textured finish of sprayed vermiculate (highly fashionable in the 1960s) with exposed beams and flush-mounted rectangular light fittings. The living room has a face brick feature wall, dominated by fireplace with a tall sloping copper fireplace hood. There seems to be a certain amount of built-in timber furniture, include full-width storage units along walls in the lounge room and master bedroom, and smaller units flanking the living room fireplace. Several rooms walls have floral print wallpaper that may not be original, and there are also some colonial-style wall lights that were probably installed when the property changed ownership in the late 1970s. Full-height metal-framed windows and sliding doors open from the main hallway and living room into the central courtyard, and there is also a rear balcony of the living room with mosaic tiled floor and solid brick balustrade with metal railing set into terrazzo capping. The courtyard area has a semi-open roof with exposed beams. The ceramic tiled surround, and the powder-coated safety fence around the pool, are not original.

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