
House and Garden



171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North



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Location

171 Doncaster Road BALWYN NORTH, BOROONDARA CITY

Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO882

Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 14, 2021

What is Significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, built in 1941 by L J Adam on the Rookwood Estate, is significant.

Significant elements of its setting include the low fence of rough-faced stone, mild steel gates, clinker brick garage, slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls and distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps.

In addition, early or original plantings including cypresses, including the conical *Cupressus sempervirens*, a Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica 'glauca'*), camellias, azaleas and holly. The climbing rose is in keeping with the period, but its age is unknown.

How is it significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North is of local architectural (representative) significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, are significant as externally intact examples of a two-storey Moderne dwelling, carefully sited to take advantage of its prominent corner position within what appears to be an original garden. The house demonstrates key design elements of the Moderne style including a layered geometric massed form, a strong horizontal emphasis, open upper terraces and the use of contemporary materials such as corner and steel framed windows and patterned brickwork. Like many Moderne houses of its era, it juxtaposes a traditional hipped roof with parapeted and curved elements. The garage is an original part of the design and echoes the materiality - clinker bricks with tapestry brick accents - and parapeted form of the house. These elements are complemented and enhanced by the retention of a highly intact setting including both original hard landscaping and plantings. Hard landscaping includes a low fence of rough-faced slate, ornate mild-steel gates, a slate crazy paved hardstand in front of the house (and possibly the curved drive as well), stone retaining walls and distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps. Front garden plantings are of interest as an example of the "featuristic" Australian garden popular in the 1940s and '50s, characterised by the use of dark-foliaged evergreen trees and shrubs which serve as the backdrop for a colourful seasonal display of flowers. (Criterion D)

Heritage Study/Consultant Balwyn Heritage Study Peer Review Stage 2, Context, 2020;

Construction dates 1941,

Hermes Number 207076

Property Number

Physical Description 1

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, is a substantial two-storey brick dwelling constructed in 1941. Positioned on the north-east corner of Doncaster and Hill roads, the house is located on an elevated allotment which slopes gently down from north to south. Constructed in clinker brick with a roof of glazed terracotta tiles, the house has Moderne stylistic characteristics, especially emphasising horizontal elements within its elevations and the use of smooth curves to parapets and walls.

A primary hip roof runs north to south with a secondary hip intersecting at its mid-point, creating a T-shaped roof plan. Lower flat-roofed sections project from the intersection of the two hips and mark the entry porch and stairwell to Doncaster Road, and allow for trafficable decks at the upper level. Clad in glazed terracotta tiles, the ridgelines have concealed transverse flashings under the tiles, removing the need for ridge capping adding a note of simplicity and elegance.

Asymmetrically massed, the principal southern elevation, facing Doncaster Road, features a pair of cascading flat-roofed projections housing the entry portico and stairwell beyond. Three slightly incongruous Corinthian columns support the entry portico with curved corner. Under the entrance portico is a single glazed entry door with glazed side lights. A painted reinforced concrete lintel supports clinker brickwork above and features a subtle decorative panel created using contrasting blonde tapestry brick banding. This panel detail is repeated on the

stairwell rising behind and wraps around its curved corner. An ornate mild-steel railing sits on top of the brickwork. Access to a balcony above the portico is through a single glazed door. Tripartite timber framed windows feature fixed central glazed panels with double hung sash sidelights broken by horizontal glazing bars. A timber-framed hood to the front upper window may be original or an early addition to conceal a window blind.

The western elevation, facing Hill Road, replicates the dominant features of the southern elevation exploiting the house's prominent corner position. Creating a unified effect with its counterpart, the elevation is distinguished by the cascading, almost waterfall-like treatment of the stairwell and entry portico wall heights. A slender steel-framed double-height leaded stair window introduces a contrasting vertical element to the otherwise horizontal tripartite windows, and hints of the proportions of the entry hall within. A decorative mild-steel panel sits between the first and ground floor timber-framed tripartite windows.

The rear northern elevation features an upper deck above a covered porch. Accessed off a flat-roofed sunroom, a simple mild-steel rail, painted reinforced concrete lintel and single band of contrasting tapestry bricks emphasises the horizontality of the design. An upper corner window is positioned at the north-east corner.

The eastern elevation is punctuated with a number of vertical timber-framed double hung sash windows. Expressed chimney breasts, positioned towards each end of the elevation, pierce the roof and culminate in simple corbeled tops.

The property sits within a highly intact setting. A distinctive low fence of rough-faced ferruginous brown and slate runs along the eastern and southern boundaries with a decorative mild-steel pedestrian gate at its south-east corner and drive gates at each of its ends off Hill and Doncaster roads. Substantial piers demarcate these entry points with unusual slab and half round capings fashioned out of the stone. A single garage of clinker brick is accessed off Hill Road. Flat roofed with a parapet that steps up to a central point, the garage echoes detailing on the house including banding of cream tapestry bricks and a contrasting painted reinforced concrete lintel. Potentially early garden elements including slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls and unusual zig zag infill detailing to the front path further complement the suburban comfort of the property and its North Balwyn location. It is not clear if the crazy paving to the curved driveway itself is original or a replacement. Certainly the crazy paved hardstand at the top of the driveway was not unusual for the era. There is an Olive Mellor garden design from Australian Home Beautiful of 1948, for example, that shows a driveway terminating in a large crazy paved area, geared towards the motor car (Cuffley, 1993:140).

The garden is interesting for its restrained foliage colours (mostly dark greens) and a structure provided by lushly planted dark leaved evergreen trees and shrubs (cypress, camellias, azaleas, holly) which are all typical of the house's era. It will also erupt seasonally into quite colourful displays of azalea, camellia and rose, to create what Peter Cuffley characterises as "featuristic" in Australian suburban gardens of the '40s and '50s, where bright flowers and bold colours were also part of the scene (Cuffley 1993:141). Plantings in the front garden that appear typical for the era (and popular) and consistent with the period and style of the house are:

- . Conical cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*)
- . There appears to be another evergreen conifer with cypress-like foliage as well, less clipped/conical in shape.
- . Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'glauca'), as a specimen tree
- . Camellias (probably cultivars of *Camellia reticulata* and *Camellia japonica*)
- . Azaleas
- . Holly (*Ilex aquifolia*) which looks quite mature.
- . Climbing Rose (to first floor sundeck), of a salmon pink colour. Climbing roses were also in interwar gardens, as were standard roses. While consistent with period, it is not clear if this is an early planting or a later one.

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North is of very high integrity with no visible alterations to original or early elements of the place. The building retains its original building and roof forms and fenestrations.

The integrity of the house is greatly enhanced by the unusually high level of intactness of these main elements, which include the glazed terracotta roof with concealed transverse flashings to the ridge lines, clinker brick walls, glazed wall vents with hoods, chimneys, curved entry porch with columns, painted concrete lintel and blonde

tapestry brick details, curved stairwell with blonde tapestry brick detailing and steel framed window with leaded panes, original glazed door with glazed side-lights and window joinery including a timber hood to the upper window on the southern elevation, mild-steel balustrades and decorative mild-steel panel on the western elevation.

The integrity of the place is greatly enhanced by original or early elements including the low fence of rough-faced stone, mild steel gates, clinker brick garage, slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls, distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps, and the mature garden plantings of evergreen trees and shrubs, many of them bearing bright flowers.

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.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>