

# BISHOPSCOURT



BISHOPSCOURT SOHE  
2008



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1 bishopscourt east melb  
view front



bishopscourt east melb front  
residence sw jun1999



bishopscourt east melb  
garden south west corner  
house sw jun1999



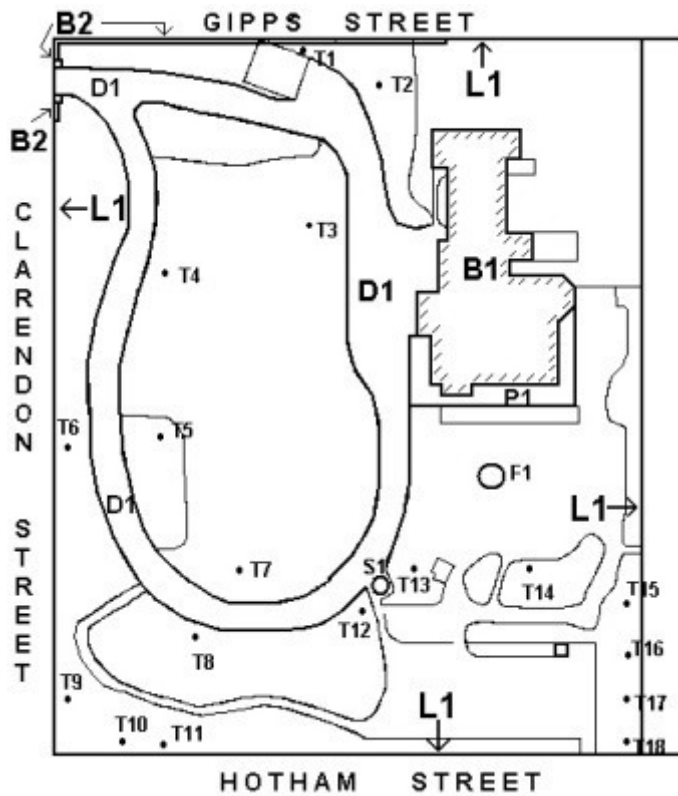
bishopscourt east melb front  
gates jc apr1999



bishopscourt east melb front  
redbrick sw jun1999



bishopscourt east melb house  
rear sw jun1999



bishopscourt clarendon street plan

## Location

84-122 CLARENDON STREET EAST MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE CITY

## Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0027

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO131

## VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

## Amendment to Registration

September 9, 1999

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 7, 2021

What is significant?

The elevated site for Bishopscourt was selected by Bishop Perry, first Bishop of Melbourne, in 1848. Tenders for Bishopscourt were called by architects Newson and Blackburn in 1849. The site was partly cleared and construction began only to be delayed by labour shortages caused by the onset of the Gold Rush. In 1851 architects Russell and Thomas called tenders for the completion of Bishopscourt, and by January 1853 it was ready for occupation by Bishop Perry and his wife. When completed in 1853 Bishopscourt consisted of a two-storey bluestone building with tower, flanked on the north side by a one-storey wing. In late 1854 architect Charles Swyer was engaged to lay out the grounds but it is unknown what these works actually were. It is possible that Newson and Blackburn were the principle garden designers, siting the residence in its corner position east of an ancient River Red Gum which survived on the site until the 1990s. In 1857 a reservation was made for a cathedral to be built alongside Bishopscourt, between Hotham and George Streets, but eventually the parish church of Holy Trinity used the site. Bishopscourt became Government House temporarily between 1874 and 1876. Fifty years after its construction Bishopscourt was found costly to maintain, inconvenient and unsatisfactory as a residence and a recommendation was made for its demolition and replacement. There was much deliberation and a compromise was met and in 1903 the north bluestone wing was demolished and replaced with a brick wing. Architects Inskip and Butler who also altered the gardens at this time designed the Federation Queen Anne Domestic style red brick wing. Later additions were carried out on the east side of the red brick section in the 1960s. Of the original 1853 house only the bluestone exterior and towers survive. The interior of the building has been altered many times as Bishopscourt was renovated before each new bishop or archbishop moved in.

How is it significant?

Bishopscourt is of historical, social, aesthetic, architectural, scientific and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Bishopscourt is of historical and social significance as the oldest house in East Melbourne and as the residence of the Anglican Bishop and later Archbishop of Melbourne since 1853. Being the last intact urban estate in the City of Melbourne the grounds of Bishopscourt are of outstanding historical significance. Bishopscourt is a rare surviving example within inner Melbourne of a mansion with its garden setting still remaining substantially intact. The Bishopscourt gardens are of social significance as they have been the venue of official hospitality, garden parties, fetes and carnivals over many years.

Bishopscourt is of architectural significance as the bluestone section of the house is an important example of early Melbourne architecture. Its asymmetrical form with tower and arcades was the precursor of many grand Melbourne mansions. The rubbed bluestone, simple mouldings and French windows reflect early building techniques. The 1903 red brick addition is of architectural interest as an interesting solution to a design problem and for its detailing to enable its integration with the 1853 bluestone section. Bishopscourt is of great aesthetic significance for the relationship between the residence and grounds, forming an impressive space that continues the grand proportions of the adjacent Fitzroy Gardens. The position of the residence and the picturesque landscape with a sweeping drive and lawn creates the illusion of much larger grounds. The enclosed formal south garden with fountain is also of aesthetic importance contributing to the picturesque landscape.

The Bishopscourt gardens have landscape and scientific significance for their collection of mature plants, particularly trees of evergreen and deciduous species. Because of their historic, aesthetic, botanical and in certain instances scientific (notably T8 Ilex perado subsp. platyphylla and T13 Ficus rubiginosa) significance, the trees recorded in the extent of registration provide an important contribution and context to the place. The north east corner of the site in particular is of archaeological importance for its potential to yield information on the

outbuildings, cess pits and glasshouses which once occupied the site.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

#### General Conditions:

1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.
2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible.
3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it.
4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

#### Exterior

\*Minor repairs and maintenance which replace like with like.

\*Removal of any extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.

\*Installation or repair of damp-proofing by either injection method or grouted pocket method.

#### Interior

\*Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme.

\*Removal of paint from originally unpainted or oiled joinery, doors, architraves, skirtings and decorative strapping.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of curtain track, rods, blinds and other window dressings.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and

other wall mounted artworks.

\*Refurbishment of bathrooms, toilets including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of kitchen benches and fixtures including sinks, stoves, ovens, refrigerators, dishwashers etc and associated plumbing and wiring.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and provided that the location of the heating unit is concealed from view.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring provided that all new wiring is fully concealed and any original light switches, pull cords, push buttons or power outlets are retained in-situ. Note: if wiring original to the place was carried in timber conduits then the conduits should remain in-situ.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.

\*Installation, removal or replacement of smoke detectors

#### Landscape Permit Exemptions

\* Repairs, conservation, and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, sculptures, fountain, sundial, steps, paths, roadways and gutters, drainage and irrigation systems, edging, fences and gates.

\* The process of gardening; mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead plants, disease and weed control, emergency and safety works and landscaping and planting to retain the existing landscape character.

\* In the event of loss of any tree specified in the Extent of Registration, replanting with the same species of tree as that removed.

\* Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373.

\* Removal of plants listed as Noxious Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994.

\* Installation, removal or replacement of garden watering and drainage systems.

Construction dates	1853,
Architect/Designer	Blackburn, James Jnr,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered archaeological place,
Hermes Number	358
Property Number	

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## History

### Contextual History:

The first Government Grants in East Melbourne were held in 1852, and the last in 1870, with the exception of the Yarra Park subdivision which was not offered for sale until 1881. These first East Melbourne land sales coincided with the prosperity of the gold rush, and choice blocks in the vicinity of Bishopscourt, completed in 1853, brought up to £2000 making the Government reserve price of £300 look ridiculous. East Melbourne was immediately recognised as a most desirable residential area, and from the beginnings of its settlement attracted a large proportion of residents who were something important in the city. East Melbourne appears to have had in those days little community life of its own. It had no common focal institutions. The sense of community and social activity that it did have centred around the churches of some dozen religious denominations which flourished within its boundaries. From 1860 to 1890 an exceptionally large proportion of Victoria's leading figures in politics, commerce and the professions slept in East Melbourne, but the activities which made them prominent were carried out in the city (Burchett 1975 p. 9).

The original Crown Grant for Bishopscourt was two acres, but the Grant issued on 18 February 1851 was for four acres one rood and comprised the whole Section 13 of 20 allotments bounded by Clarendon, Gipps, Powlett and Hotham Streets. It was particularised for dwelling 2 acres 20 perches, church 1 acre. It appears that by mutual consent the grant was later revised and reduced to twelve allotments from the Clarendon Street frontage back, on this section, and in handsome compensation, more than two acres fronting Clarendon Street in the next Section south, between Hotham and George Streets (Burchett 1977 p. 70).

### History of Place:

The elevated site for Bishops court was selected by Bishop Perry, first Bishop of Melbourne, in 1848. He was offered more extensive sites further from the city, but wished to be within walking distance of his parishioners (Burchett 1975 p.25). The first Crown Land Sales in East Melbourne were held in 1852, and absurdly high prices were paid for lots close to Bishops court and the proposed Cathedral, for which half the next block fronting Clarendon Street was reserved. (Burchett 1975 p.26). The elevated site for Bishops court was selected by Bishop Perry, first Bishop of Melbourne, in 1848. Tenders for Bishops court were called by architects Newson and Blackburn (presumably James Blackburn Senior) in 1849. The site was partly cleared and construction began only to be delayed by labour shortages caused by the onset of the Gold Rush. In 1851 architects Russell (presumably Robert Russell) and Thomas called tenders for the completion of Bishops court. By January 1853 for double the original estimate Bishops court was ready for occupation by Bishop Perry and his wife. The gold rush interfered with progress, and it was not until 1853, In 1857 a reservation was made for a cathedral to be built alongside, between Hotham and George Streets, but eventually the parish church of Holy Trinity used the site. On completion in 1853 Bishops court consisted of a two-storey bluestone building with tower, flanked on the north side by a one-storey wing. In late 1854 architect Charles Swyer was engaged to lay out the grounds but it is unknown what these works actually were. It is possible that Newson and Blackburn were the principle garden designers, siting the residence in its corner position east of an ancient River Red Gum which survived on the site until 1998. In 1857 a reservation was made for a cathedral to be built alongside Bishops court, between Hotham and George Streets, but eventually the parish church of Holy Trinity used the site. Bishops court became Government House temporarily between 1874 and 1876. Bishop Perry had gone to England and, as the new Government House was not ready, Governor Sir George Ferguson Bowen and later the Acting Governor, Chief Justice Sir William Stawell were in residence, until Bishop Moorhouse was appointed. After fifty years the building was found costly to maintain and inconvenient and unsatisfactory as a residence. A recommendation was made that it be demolished and replaced. The proposed demolition of the old place is viewed with regret by members of the Anglican Church and by old colonists of every creed (Burchett 1977 p. 53). There was much deliberation and a compromise was met and in 1903 the north bluestone wing was demolished and replaced with a brick wing. Architects Inskip and Butler who also altered the gardens at this time designed the Federation Queen Anne Domestic style red brick wing. Details of the garden alterations are unknown. Later additions were carried out on the east side of the red brick section in the 1960s. Of the original 1853 house only the bluestone exterior and tower survive.

### James Blackburn

Newson and Blackburn called tenders for the construction of Bishops court in 1849. The Blackburn here is assumed to be James Blackburn senior. Born in Upton Essex in 1803, Blackburn was trained as an engineer, surveyor and architect and in 1833 was employed by the Commissioner for sewers for Holborn and Finsbury in London. He forged a cheque for £600 and in May 1833 was transported for life to Tasmania. His wife and daughter followed in 1835. Immediately on his arrival he was employed by the Department of Roads and Bridges and completed extensive works across the state. In 1841 he received a free pardon and entered a private practice with James Thomson, executing many fine buildings. In April 1849 he sailed from Tasmania for Melbourne and set up private practice. On October 24, 1849 he was appointed City Surveyor and in 1850-1851 he designed the Yan Yean Water system. He died in March 1854.

### Walter Butler

Walter Richmond Butler was born 24 March 1864 at Pensford, Somerset England. At 15 he was articled to architect Alexander Lauder of Barnstaple. In 1885 W.R. Lethaby encouraged Butler to move to London and work with J.D. Sedding. He was accepted into the arts and crafts and domestic revival circles centred on William Morris and R.N. Shaw, among whom his closest friend was Ernest Gimson. In June 1888 Butler left sedding's office and sailed for Australia, perhaps at the prompting of young Melbourne architect Beverley Ussher then visiting London. On 25 April 1894 Butler married Emilie Milicent Howard. From 1889 until 1893 Butler was in partnership with Ussher. In 1896 he was joined by George C. Inskip but they parted in 1905 after a dispute. In 1907-16 he partnered Ernest R. Bradshaw and after World War 1 he was in practice with his nephew Richard as W. & R. Butler, which briefly included Marcus Martin. In the late 1930s Butler was in partnership with Hugh Pettit, but he retired when Pettit enlisted for World War II. Many of Butlers clients were wealthy pastoralists and businessmen and he designed numerous country houses and large houses for the Melbourne Suburbs, including Blackwood (1891) near Penshurst and Warrawee (1906) Toorak, for A. Rutter Clark. As an architect to the diocese of Melbourne from 1895, he designed the extensions to Bishops court. His other church work includes St Albans, Armadale (1899) and the Wangaratta Cathedral (1907). For the Union Bank of Australia he designed many branch banks and was also associated with several tall city buildings such as Collins House (1910) and the Queensland Insurance Building (1911). He died at his home in Toorak 31 May 1949.

Associated People: Tenant ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE; Assoc.People ANGLICAN BISHOP

Blackburn & Newson, architects;

## **Assessment Against Criteria**

### **Criterion A**

The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object.

Bishopscourt is of historical significance as the oldest house in East Melbourne and as the residence of the Anglican Bishop and later Archbishop of Melbourne since 1853. Being the last urban estate in the City of Melbourne the grounds of Bishopscourt are of outstanding historical significance.

### **Criterion B**

The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness.

Bishopscourt is a rare surviving example within inner Melbourne of a mansion with its garden setting still remaining substantially intact.

### **Criterion C**

The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage.

The north east corner of the site in particular is of archaeological importance for its potential to yield information on the outbuildings, cess pits and glasshouses which once occupied the site.

### **Criterion D**

The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects.

### **Criterion E**

The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.

Bishopscourt is of architectural significance as the bluestone section of the house is an important example of early Melbourne architecture. Its asymmetrically form with tower and arcades was the precursor of many grand Melbourne mansions. The rubbed bluestone, simple mouldings and French windows reflect early building techniques. The 1903 red brick addition is of architectural interest as an interesting solution to a design problem and for its detailing to enable its integration with the 1853 bluestone section. Bishopscourt is of great aesthetic significance for the relationship between the residence and grounds, forming an impressive space that continues the grand proportions of the adjacent Fitzroy Gardens. The position of the residence and the picturesque landscape with a sweeping drive and lawn creates the illusion of much larger grounds. The enclosed formal south garden with fountain is also of aesthetic importance.

### **Criterion F**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements.

The Bishopscourt gardens have landscape scientific significance for their collection of mature plants, particularly trees of evergreen and deciduous species. The south east corner of the site although not retaining early vegetation is important for its use as an orchard.

### **Criterion G**

The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations.

The Bishopscourt gardens are of social significance as they have been the venue of official hospitality, garden parties, fetes and carnivals over many years. Bishopscourt has been the residence of the Anglican Bishop and later Archbishop of Melbourne since 1853. Bishopscourt has strong associations with the eleven men who have served in that position, as well as the extended clergy and parishioners.

Criterion H

Any other matter which the Council considers relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended in that the Heritage Register Number 27 in the categories described as a Heritage Place and Archaeological Place is now described as:

Bishopscourt, 120 Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, Melbourne City Council.

#### EXTENT:

1. All the building known as Bishopscourt B1 and Bluestone Fence and Gates B2 marked on Diagram 27 held by the Executive Director.

2. All the landscape features marked D1 Sweeping Drive (including glazed terracotta spoon drain), P1 Flagstones, S1 Sundial, F1 Fountain and the following Trees marked on Diagram 27 held by the Executive Director.

T1 Grevillea robusta  
T2 Grevillea robusta  
T3 Eucalyptus melliodora  
T4 Ulmus procera  
T5 Ulmus procera  
T6 Eucalyptus camaldulensis  
T7 Ulmus procera  
T8 Ilex perado subsp. platyphylla  
T9 Cupressus macrocarpa  
T10 Ulmus x hollandica  
T11 Ulmus x hollandica  
T12 Robinia pseudoacacia  
T13 Ficus rubiginosa  
T14 Ulmus x hollandica  
T15 Ulmus x hollandica  
T16 Ulmus x hollandica  
T17 Ulmus x hollandica  
T18 Schinus molle

3. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 26 held by the Executive Director, being all the land described in Certificate of Title Vol. 684 Folio 632.

Dated: 2 September 1999

RAY TONKIN

Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 36 9 September 1999 pp.2065-2066]

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*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/>*