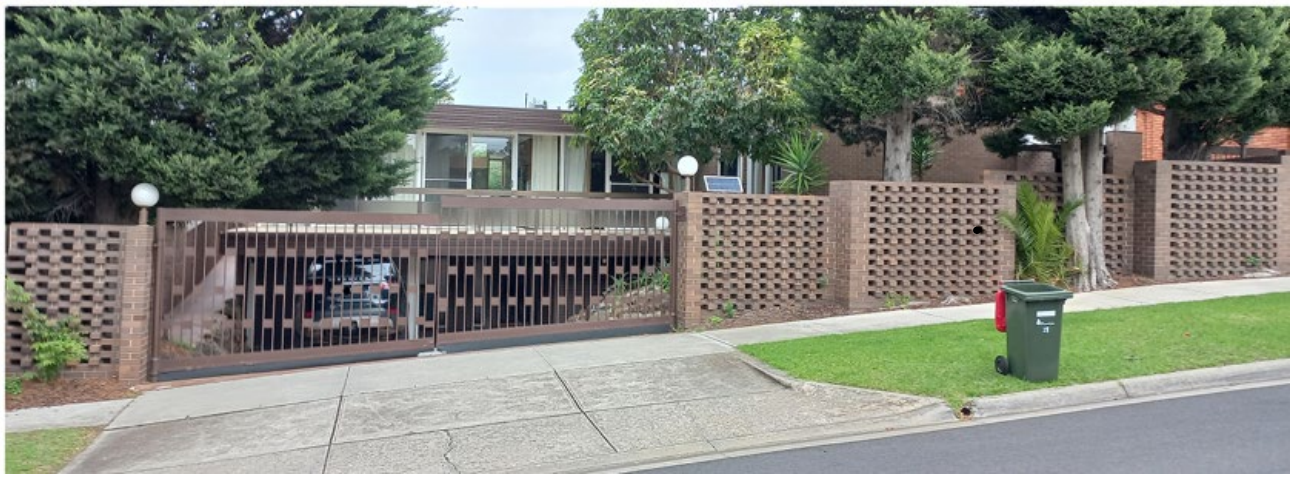
Place name:	Woods Residence (former)
Address:	21 Brewster Street, Essendon
Place typology:	Residential
Construction date range:	1965
Architectural style:	Post-War Modernist
Assessment:	Built Heritage Pty Ltd, May 2022
Recommendation:	To be included in the schedule to the heritage overlay

Photos of place:





21 Brewster Street, Essendon; photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, May 2022.

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

21 Brewster Street, Essendon, is a single-storey flat-roofed post-war modernist brick house on a sloping site, with an integrated double garage at the lower level. It was erected in 1965 for Geoffrey and Betty Wood, to a design by Clarke Hopkins & Clarke, with sympathetic alterations made during the 1970s, including a new front fence and interior renovation by Holgar & Holgar. The significant features of the house include:

- The expression of an elongated horizontal mass, slightly elevated to incorporate subfloor parking space
- The flat roof with broad eaves
- The wide balcony and full-height glazing across the street facade
- The front boundary wall with hit-and-miss brickwork screens, anodised metal gates and spherical glass lights

How is it significant?

21 Brewster Street, Essendon, is of local architectural and associational significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

21 Brewster Street, Essendon, is significant as a fine and substantially intact example of an architect-designed modernist house of the mid-1960s. It demonstrates the principal characteristics of that style including its flat roof with broad eaves, extensive full-height glazing and elongated horizontal expression, incorporating a sub-floor carport where the slope of the ground falls away. The house is also notable for the way in which its street facade was conceived to integrate with the established pre-war residential streetscape, a fact that was acknowledged at the time of completion. (Criterion E).

21 Brewster Street, Essendon, is an excellent example of the residential work of architects Clarke Hopkins & Clarke, a firm that has maintained a significant ongoing association with the Essendon area from the 1960s. While the firm is perhaps best known in the study area for the new grandstand at Essendon Cricket Ground, and buildings at both Essendon Grammar School campuses, this house was their best and most lauded residential commission therein. (Criterion H)

Description:

The house at 21 Brewster Street, Essendon, is a large flat-roofed single-storey post-war modernist house of dark brown brick construction. Laid out on an expansive U-shaped courtyard plan, the house presents an elongated double-fronted facade to Brewster Street. Responding to its sloping site, the house is partly elevated as the ground falls away from west to east, allowing for the integration of a double-width parking area underneath. The principal facade is asymmetrical, dominated by an elongated wing with a window wall that opens onto a full-width balcony above the sub-floor parking area, balanced by a smaller projecting wing at the west end. This projecting wing has a recessed fascia and blank walls, flanking an off-centre vertical strip window. The horizontality of the longer wing is emphasized by wide panelled fascias at the roof and floor levels, and a metal-framed balcony balustrade that incorporates panels of smoked glass. The window wall that opens to the balcony comprises continuous bays of full-height windows and sliding glass doors with white-painted sashes.

The street boundary is delineated by a tall brick wall of dark brown brick construction, comprising solid piers that alternate with wide bays of hit-and-miss screens, further enlivened by projecting headers. At the left end of the property, the double driveway has a pair of wide bronzed metal gates, incorporating small square panels for decorative effect. At the other end, there is a smaller pedestrian gate, similarly detailed, set into a recessed bay with a letterbox, intercom and storage built into one side. The gateway opens to a path leading to the front door, set into a recessed porch on the west (side) elevation.

The street frontage of the house incorporates works that were undertaken in the 1970s to the design of other architects. The current metal and glass balcony balustrade (replacing the original timber plank balustrade) dates from 1972, and the front boundary wall (with anodized metal gates and spherical glass lights) was added in 1978 as part of the mostly internal refurbishment by Holgar & Holgar. These are sympathetic works that add an additional layer of architectural interest to the building and, as such, are deemed to enhance, rather than diminish, the overall significance of the place.

History:

Contextual History

City of Moonee Valley occupies part of the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woi-wurrung people. Many sites in the area now known as City of Moonee Valley show evidence of Woi-wurrung activities and spiritual connections. Fish were trapped in the rivers and creeks, stone was quarried from the river edges, murnong daisy was collected and kangaroos hunted across grassland areas, and bark was harvested from trees in the river valleys. This relationship between the Woi-wurrung and the land, water, animals and plants, continues to this day (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.29).

The first Europeans to explore the area known as Moonee Valley was a surveyor, Charles Grimes in 1803. In 1836, settlers moving from Van Diemen's Land crossed the area in the hope of finding empty, cheap and plentiful land for sheep. By 1842, surveyors had created the first map of the Parish of Doutta Galla and then Woi-wurrung lands were offered for sale by the British Crown to Europeans (noting that the land was never ceded). The Wurundjeri were moved off their land which had a profound impact on their culture, health and language. By 1860, the entire parish was sold (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.32-33).

Early development of the area began with the goldrush period of the 1850s which saw Mount Alexander Road used as a thoroughfare to the diggings with over 30,000 people estimated as moving along the dirt road each week. Businesses and shops sprang up providing sustenance, transport and accommodation to service the passing gold rush trade. Some very early wayside hotels and shops still survive from this period (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p. 51-54). After the heady days of the goldrush, the 1860s saw Essendon, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Flemington develop into permanent townships. The development of railways by private companies gave huge impetus to suburban development of the area with the opening of the Essendon railway in 1860. The government purchased the line in 1868. Suburban trains terminated at Essendon and it wasn't until 1889 that Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Newmarket stations were completed. By 1893 stations opened at Strathmore and Pascoe Vale and in 1922 Glenbervie Station opened. The railways provided an enormous boost to residential development along the line and those who had previously moved to areas without trains, now clamoured for them (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.59).

By the 1880s Essendon had become a Borough and by 1891 had a population of 14,411. Many subdivisions occurred during the land boom of the 1880s and many failed to eventuate due to the depression of the 1890s. In the interwar period a boom in subdivision and residential infill occurred in Travancore, Essendon, Ascot Vale, Strathmore and Moonee Ponds, which was focused on new transport routes along the tram lines, first established to Essendon in 1905. In 1919 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was formed and lines were extended and improved. The tram lines saw development occur either side of Maribyrnong Road, further along Mt Alexander Road, Buckley Street and Keilor Road (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.65-68, p.115).

Education was an important consideration in the development of the municipality, with schools having been established in Essendon and Flemington in the 1850s. The development of State schools in the area reflects the major phases of education and includes a number of 'firsts'; the first non-denominational school in Victoria was set up in Essendon in 1850, the first purpose-built infants school in the state was set up in 1902, and Essendon High School was the first purpose-built high school in the Melbourne metropolitan area. Denominational schools were also set up in the area in the early 1850s, with more private schools established during the boom period of the 1880s. Residents wanted a better life than the one most had left behind in Britain, including a good education for their children (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.157-161).

In the three decades after the Second World War, Melbourne's suburbs ballooned outward to cater for post-war migration, the baby boom, an increasing need for new housing, and a more car-centred economy. Areas to the north of Essendon had been open paddocks in 1945, but by 1950 the Shire of Keilor found themselves with a developing suburb with no name. It was later called Niddrie. Similarly, Airport West was developing quickly with houses being built before the roads. By 1964 it was claimed that Airport West had the cheapest cream brick veneers in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.120-121). Many houses in these post-war areas were austere weatherboard or brick veneer bungalows, with a few scattered architect-designed or project homes on new blocks, particularly along the Boulevard in Aberfeldie. These post-war housing areas were car-centred communities located close to industry along Keilor Road, Matthews Avenue around Essendon Airport and East Keilor. By 1960 Airport West had its first hotel, the famous Skyways Hotel and then in the 1970s the first shopping centre, owned by Westfield, was begun (heritage ALLIANCE, G*ap Heritage Study*, 2005: p.28-30).

Post-war housing pressure also saw a huge investment by the Housing Commission of Victoria who developed 150 bungalows in concrete, weatherboard and brick in Aberfeldie. They then began an ambitious estate of houses and flats on a 77 acre site at Ascot Vale in 1949. These low-rise walk-up flats eventually gave rise to the high-rise flats of Flemington which opened in June 1965 (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.123).

Many post-war migrants bought or built houses in the outer areas of the municipality, close to employment and industry and where new, cheaper housing was readily available. These developments and public housing in Aberfeldie, Ascot Vale and Flemington have had a long-lasting effect on the nature of the Moonee Valley community which today is one of the most diverse and vibrant in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.124).

Place History

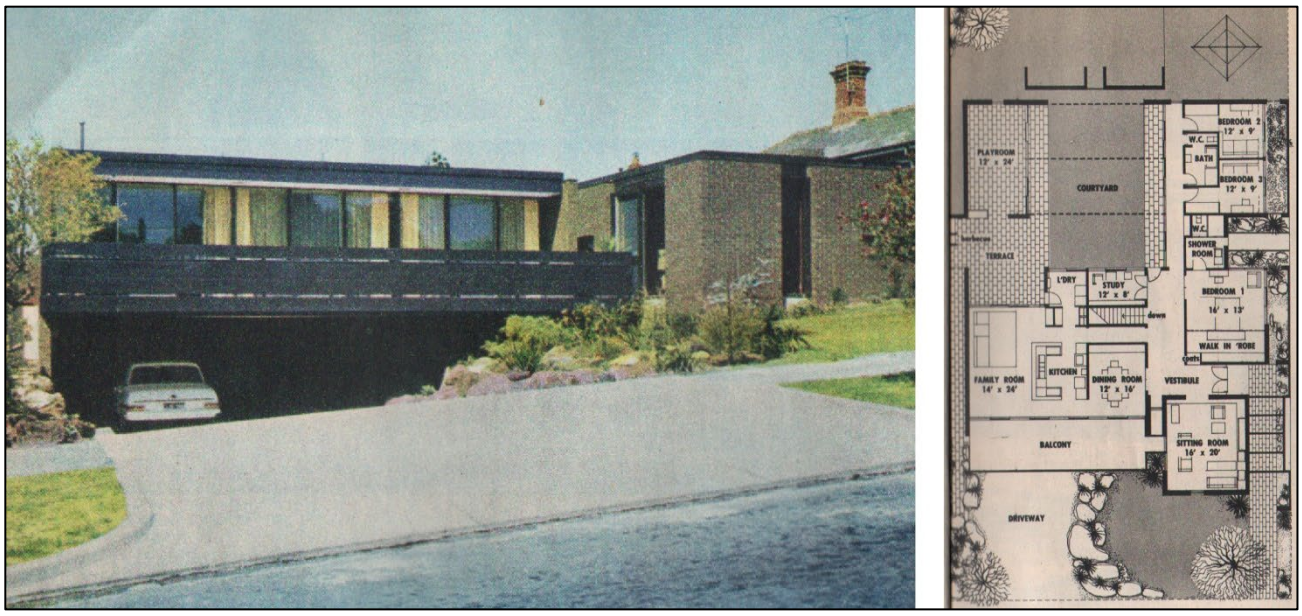
The house at 21 Brewster Street, Essendon, was erected in 1965 for Geoffrey and Betty Wood, to a design by architects Clarke Hopkins & Clarke.

A prominent local butcher, Geoffrey Irvine Woods (1929-2006) was the great-great grandson of Essendon pioneer Josiah Woods (1829-1903), who migrated to Australia in 1851 and settled in Napier Street with his wife and what became a large family of ten children. One of Josiah's daughters, Martha, married Walter Gilbertson. In 1901, their eldest son Robert James Gilbertson (1881-1940) took over an existing butcher's shop in Pascoe Vale Road with colleague Harry Dunstan. The next year, they were joined by a third partner, George Ord, who was married to Gilbertson's first cousin, the former Mary Woods. The business boomed and duly expanded into a successful chain of local butchers' shops under the name R J Gilbertson Pty Ltd. After the deaths of co-founders Dunstan and Gilbertson in 1939 and 1940, the empire was carried on by Gilbertson's sons and sons-in-laws, with other family members later becoming involved.

Geoffrey Woods, whose father was Robert Gilbertson's cousin and George Ord's cousin-in-law, had become involved in the family business by the 1950s. By then, the firm had expanded into a major meat supply and export empire, with a processing plant at Spotswood and many retail outlets. A particularly successful post-war offshoot was the Don Smallgoods range, which began production in 1947 and became a household name. The brand itself referenced the enduring nickname of the Essendon Football Club ("The Dons"), of which the firm's directors were keen supporters (in later years, Don Smallgoods became the team's official sponsor). It was almost certainly this prior link with the football club that prompted Geoffrey Woods to engage architects Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke to design his new house in Brewster Street. Not only had the firm recently designed the new W H Cookson Stand at the Essendon Cricket Ground (1962-63), but its principal, Jack Clarke, was a well-known player on the team and became its captain in 1965.

Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke was founded in 1960 by three young architects John Ernest "Jack" Clarke (1933-2001), Leslie Clarke (not related to Jack) and David Hopkins. All three had studied architecture at RMIT and, upon graduation, commenced work together in the City Architects' office of the Melbourne City Council before entering into partnership. The firm quickly established a reputation for fine residential work, which, in 1962, saw Jack Clarke appointed to succeed Neil Clerehan as director of the Age Small Homes Service. The firm would later become well known for the design of leisure centres and school buildings, the latter springing from an ongoing association with Essendon Grammar School dating back to the mid-1960s. Although Jack Clarke left the firm in the early 1980s, it continued to thrive under David Hopkins and Les Clarke and following their respective retirements, still remains in operation as of 2022. The firm's links with the Essendon area remain evident in recent proposals for multi-residential developments such as *Penny Lane* in Puckle Street, Moonee Ponds and *Strathmore on the Park* in Pascoe Vale Road, Strathmore (www.chc.com.au).

According to a contemporary report, Les Clarke was the supervising architect for Geoffrey Woods' new house (Age, 2 March 1968, p.21). Of the brief, Clarke was quoted as saying that the clients "asked for an impressive home of high-quality construction and finish which would provide relaxed living for two adults and two children. They wanted the kitchen to be at the centre of interest and to have an easily maintained garden". The Woods sought privacy and separation from traffic noise, which resulted in the choice of a U-shaped courtyard plan, while the streetscape context of mostly pre-war dwellings demanded that the new house "had to be modern without being intrusive". On completion, the house was subject to a feature article in a leading housing magazine, which acknowledged these concerns and concluded that "all these problems have been well handled in the design" (*Australian Home Beautiful*, May 1966, p.8). There was praise for the way in which the street facade "has something of the form of an old Victorian villa", as well as the earthy pallet of dark-coloured brickwork and stained timber, and the introspective planning that offered vistas of the garden courtyard and rear barbecue terrace.



Contemporary photograph (left) and floorplan of 21 Brewster Street. Source: Australian Home Beautiful, May 1966.

As it turned out, the Woods family remained in residence for only a brief period. Offered for sale in 1967, the house generated further press attention was loftily advertised as "one of the finest houses in Essendon" (*Age* 16 August 1967, p.41). Its new owners were Rae and Joyce Duhig. An automotive dealer from Sydney, Rae Duhig (1924-2013) had recently established his own dealership, Duhig Ford Pty Ltd, in Keilor Road, Essendon North. In 1968, the Duhigs were reported to be delighted with their modernist house in Brewster Street (*Age,* 2 March 1968, p.21). During the 1970s, they made some minor but sympathetic alterations, including replacement of the original timber balcony railing with glazed panels (1972) and, later, some interior refurbishment and a new brick boundary wall (1978). The earlier works were undertaken by local architects Peter Weston & Associates, and the later works by the Polish-born husband-and-wife architectural partnership of Holgar & Holgar, who were best known for their high-end residential commissions in Caulfield and Toorak.

Sources:

Primary Sources

"New home tailored to old neighbours", *Australian Home Beautiful*, May 1966, pp.8-11.
"Superb house", *Age*, 16 September 1967, p.41.
Ray Davie, "Time proves a house", *Age*, 2 March 1968, p.21.
Peter T Weston & Associates, "Proposed replacement balustrade at 21 Brewster Street, Essendon", working drawings, undated. City of Essendon Building Permit No 701, 9 June 1972. City of Moonee Valley.
Holgar & Holgar, "Proposed alterations to residence at 21 Brewster Street, Essendon, for Mr and Mrs R Duhig", working drawings, July 1978. City of Essendon Building Permit No 6,478. City of Moonee Valley.

Secondary Sources

Robin Victor Ord with David Steer (ed). *R J Gilbertson Pty Ltd: Premier Butchers, 1928-1978.* (Hawthorn: Motivational Communications, 1978).
Built Heritage Pty Ltd, research file on Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke.
Clark Hopkins Clarke, <www.chc.com.au>

Thematic Context:

City of Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012

6.0 Building towns, cities and the garden state

Comparative Analysis:

The following are some notable architect-designed modernist houses in the City of Moonee Valley from 1960 to 1965:

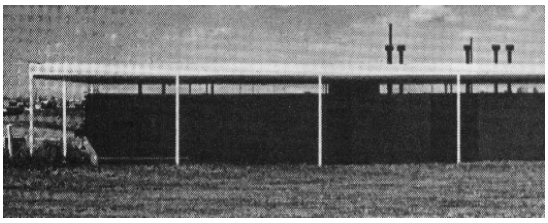
- Bourke Residence, 31 Brewster Street, Essendon (Smith & Tracey, 1960) – *included in this study*
- Abbey Residence, 33 Bournian Avenue, Strathmore (Earle & Bunbury, 1961) – *demolished circa 2019*
- Seligman Residence, 146 The Boulevard, Aberfeldie (David Pincus, 1961) – *identified in previous study but no HO*
- Holland Residence, 2-4 Oriana Court, Flemington (Brine Wierbowski, 1963) – *included in this study*
- Richardson Residence, 14 Brewster Street, Essendon (Graeme Gunn, 1963) – *existing HO165*
- Cuthbertson Residence, 53 Willonga Road, Strathmore (Albert W Ross, 1963) – *demolished circa 2018*
- Summerton Residence, 13 Alfred Road, Essendon (Ivan Anderson, 1964) – *included in this study*
- Cameron Residence, 43 Woolart Street, Strathmore (Ian Napier, 1965) – *included in this study*
- Woods Residence, 21 Brewster Street, Essendon (Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke, 1965) – *included in this study*

It is noted that only one of these examples is currently protected by an individual heritage overlay (HO).

While broadly comparable in date, these houses vary in their form, expression and finishes. The examples that are most comparable to the subject building are those in what might be described as the more conventional strain of International Modernism that continued from the late 1950s, characterised by a dominant horizontal expression, stark walls of face brick, broad-eaved flat roofs, and generous glazing, typically as full-height windows and sliding doors. This is evident in the examples at 53 Willonga Road (demolished), 146 The Boulevard (identified in previous study), 31 Brewster Street (identified in this study) and 13 Alfred Road (identified in this study). Several other examples cited above are more idiosyncratic, such as 2-4 Oriana Court (identified in this study), with a gabled roof rather than the characteristic flat roof, and 14 Brewster Street (HO165), with stark concrete block walls that hint at the emergence of the Brutalist style. Other examples listed above are more demonstrative of the sub-style showing the pervasive influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School, namely 33 Bournian Avenue (demolished) and 43 Woolart Street (included in this study)

Other examples of the work of Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke

Overall Residence, 110 Roberts Street, Essendon North (1966) House designed by Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke for another director of R J Gilbertson Pty Ltd (evidently, a cousin of Geoffrey Wood). Comparable in terms of the date and client background, but otherwise different in style, with a more traditionally domestic articulation of low hipped roof, verandah and face brickwork. In any case, the house has since been demolished.	 *Source: Australian Home Beautiful, January 1968*
W H Cookson Stand, Essendon Cricket Ground, Napier Street, Essendon (1962-63) Another major local project by Clarke, Hopkins & Clarke, albeit not directly comparable to their residential output.	 *Source: Built Heritage Pty Ltd,2022*

Buildings, Essendon Grammar School campuses (various dates) Clarke Hopkins & Clarke's output here includes the Science Laboratory (1969) at the Junior Campus in Raleigh Street, and the Sports Pavilion (1964) and Arts & Crafts Centre (1980) at the senior campus in Keilor Road. The Sports Pavilion (left) had some broad characteristics in common with the Woods Residence, but it has since been redeveloped.	 *Source: Architecture in Australia, October 1968*

Recommendation:

That the whole of 21 Brewster Street, Essendon, be included in the Heritage Overlay schedule.

Schedule:

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Solar Energy Controls	Yes
Fences and Outbuildings	Yes (front fence and gates)
Prohibited Uses	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No