
Place name:	Bourke Residence (former); <i>Rouine</i>
Address:	31 Brewster Street, Essendon
Place typology:	Residential
Construction date range:	1960
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:





Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd and Megan McDougall, May 2022 and 2021.

Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

31 Brewster Street, Essendon is a single-storey, flat-roofed, post-war modernist cream brick house on an elongated offset T-shaped plan. It was erected in 1960, for Daniel and Betty Bourke (who retained ownership of the property for almost sixty years), to a design by Smith & Tracey.

The significant features of the house include:

- The long, low expression with an elongated offset T-shaped plan and low roofline
- The flat roof with broad eaves, incorporating a pop-up clerestory
- The prominent return verandah with metal pipe columns and gull-height windows
- The large multi-paned window bays above integrated planter boxes
- The setting of the house to the rear of a long private garden without a crossover, and a front boundary wall incorporating hit-and-miss brickwork screens

How is it significant?

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

Why is it significant?

31 Brewster Street, Essendon, is significant as a fine and substantially intact example of an architect-designed modernist house of the early 1960s. It demonstrates the principal characteristics of that style including its stark cream brickwork, flat roof with broad eaves, extensive glazing and elongated horizontal expression. These defining qualities are combined with some rather more unusual and striking features such as the integrated planter boxes, geometric window sash patterns, prominent return verandah with metal pipe columns, and the pop-up clerestory roof. Owned by the same family for almost sixty years, the house remains in a remarkably intact state, including original front fence and rear carport (fronting Nicholson Street). (Criterion E).

31 Brewster Street, Essendon, is an excellent example of the residential work of architects Smith & Tracey, a firm that has maintained a significant ongoing association with the Essendon area from the 1950s. With co-founding partner Des Smith, himself a resident of the suburb for more than five decades, his firm undertook a number of projects therein, most notably Roman Catholic church and school buildings in Essendon West, where Smith resided. (Criterion H)

Description:

Rouine, at 31 Brewster Street, Essendon, is a single-storey post-war modernist house of cream brick construction with a flat roof that has broad eaves with white-painted fascias, and a distinctive pop-up clerestory. Laid out on an elongated and offset T-shaped plan, the house presents an asymmetrical triple-fronted facade to the street, dominated by a deeply projecting front wing to the right (west) side. Its front wall is mostly blank, enlivened by a pattern of projecting header bricks. At the corner, there is a recessed window bay with sloped brick sill and white-painted fixed sashes with narrower awning to the bottom. The side wall of the wing is divided by projecting piers into four large window bays, each containing similarly-detailed fixed sashes, with the narrow awning sashes alternating from top to bottom. A low planter box, in matching cream brick, runs along the window line of both facades.

The recessed part of the street frontage, to the left side, is double-fronted, with full-height window walls that open onto a deep return verandah with metal pipe column, crazy-paved stonework and a large slab-like chimney at the junction. The front entrance is set into a recess at the far (west) end of the verandah, where it abuts the projecting front wing.

The house is set well back from Brewster Street, in a private garden setting where the front boundary is marked by a low screen-like wall of matching cream brickwork in a hit-and-miss pattern. The west side of the property has a nominal frontage to Nicholson Street, with a narrow driveway that provides access to the flat-roofed double carport that projects to the rear of the house. There is no crossover to Brewster Street.

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 Dousta 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 Glenberrie 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, *Gap 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 31 Brewster Street, Essendon was erected in 1960 for Daniel and Betty Bourke, to a design by architects Smith & Tracey.

Daniel Meskill Bourke (1916-2017) was born in Collingwood but his family had settled in Albert Park by 1940, when he enlisted with the Volunteer Defence Corps while also running a dry-cleaning business in association with his younger brother Matthew. In 1943, Bourke married Phyllis Mae "Betty" Meagher (1921-2015) and the couple moved to Strathmore, where they occupied a modest pre-war brick dwelling in Hayes Road. With a teenage son and three younger daughters by the late 1950s, the Bourkes elected to build a new house and purchased a rare holding of vacant land at 31 Brewster Street. This formed part of what had been the expansive grounds of *Ardoch Towers*, an imposing Victorian villa at No 33, on the south-east corner of Nicholson Street. In September 1959, the Bourkes acquired the title to the site (Certificate of Title, 8246/435), which straddled the east and south sides of the existing villa and thus formed an L-shaped block with principal frontage to Brewster Street and a narrower frontage to Nicholson Street.

To design their new family home, the Bourkes turned to the architectural partnership of Smith & Tracey. Founded in 1949 by Desmond Smith (1918-1992) and Daniel Tracey (1916-2006), the firm expanded two years later with the admission of two more partners, Eric Lyon and Leslie Brick, and was renamed Smith, Tracey, Lyon & Brock. For the remainder of that decade, it fostered an enviable reputation for modernist houses as well as a range of projects for the Roman Catholic denomination that included churches as well as colleges for the Christian Brothers at North Melbourne, Springvale, Pascoe Vale and Mentone, a convent chapel at Mansfield, and a much-publicised shelter for homeless men on Flemington Road, North Melbourne. Following the departure of Lyon and Brock in 1960, the firm reverted to its original name, subsequently maintaining its Roman Catholic clientele as well as designing tenpin bowling alleys, factories and the occasional private dwelling. The firm remains in operation as of 2022, and its long links with the Essendon area are demonstrated by such recent projects as the new chapel (2018) at St Bernard's College, Essendon West.



Contemporary photograph of 31 Brewster Street by Peter Wille. Source: Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria.

It is unconfirmed how the Bourke family came to engage Smith & Tracey, although it is worth noting that co-founding partner Des Smith was himself a longtime resident of Essendon West who lived in Nimmo Street from around the time of his marriage in 1941 until the early 1960s, and then in McCarron Parade until at least the 1980s. At the time the Bourkes engaged them, the architects had recently completed several projects in the vicinity, notably two Roman Catholic denominational schools in Essendon West and another in Pascoe Vale South (see comparative analysis). As the Bourkes were of the Roman Catholic faith themselves, and attended St Monica's Church in Moonee Ponds (*Age*, 30 January 1967, p.9), they would surely have been aware of these new complexes, all completed prior to 1959.

Responding to the L-shaped site, Daniel and Betty Bourke's new family home was laid out on an elongated linear plan, with four bedrooms in the projecting front wing and a large carport to the rear that was accessed via the narrower frontage to Nicholson Street. The house was evidently completed in 1960, as it was credited to the then newly-rebadged firm of Smith & Tracey, rather than its prior incarnation of Smith, Tracey, Lyon & Brock. Upon completion, the house was photographed by indefatigable amateur architectural photographer Peter Wille who, himself a member of the Smith & Tracey office, is likely to have played a role in its documentation and/or supervision. The Bourke family was destined to remain living in the house (which they named *Rouine*) for almost sixty years, with the property finally being sold for the first time in 2017, the year of Daniel Bourke's death at the age of 101 years.

Sources:

Primary sources

Certificate of Title, Vol 8246, Fol 435, created 9 September 1959. <www.landata.vic.gov.au>

Secondary sources

Built Heritage Pty Ltd, "Smith & Tracey", *Dictionary of Unsung Architects*, <www.builtheritage.comn.au>

"Smith+Tracey Architects", <www.smithtracey.com.au>

Thematic Context:

City of Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History, 2012

6.0 Building towns, cities and the garden state

6.7 Making homes for Victorians

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, 1964-66) – *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 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), 21 Brewster Street (identified in this study) and 13 Alfred Road (identified in this study).

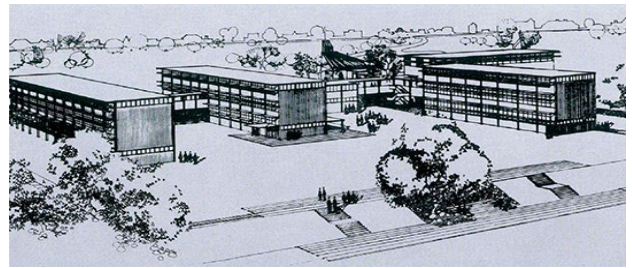
Several other examples cited above are more idiosyncratic, such as 2-4 Oriana Court (identified in this study), with a gabled roof rather than the characteristic flat roof, and 14 Brewster Street (HO165), with stark concrete block walls that hint at the emergence of the Brutalist style. Other examples 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 local examples of the work of Smith & Tracey

<p>RC School of Our Lady of the Nativity Fawkner Street, Essendon West (1957-58)</p> <p>Scheme for original combined chapel/school building on this site, prior to erection of separate church in 1967 (designed by S J Moran). Building still stands, albeit in somewhat altered condition. It has been identified in this study and recommended for HO with adjacent church.</p>	 <p>Source: Built Heritage Pty Ltd, May 2022</p>
<p>Classroom additions at Resurrection House, 6 Aberfeldie Street, Essendon West (1956)</p> <p>Smith & Tracey undertook additions to this denominational school operated by the Sisters of the Resurrection, who, since 1952, had occupied a large Victorian-era mansion in Aberfeldie Street. The school still operates but the status of the 1956 additions is unknown.</p>	<p>NO IMAGE AVAILABLE</p>

St Bernard's College, Rosehill Road,
Essendon West (1961-63 and later)

Smith & Tracey prepared the original campus masterplan, with the first stage completed in 1963. The firm has retained ongoing involvement with the school's development for five decades thence. Most of the early fabric, however, has been replaced or remodelled during successive phases of upgrade and redevelopment.



Source: <www.smithtracey.com.au>

Recommendation:

That the whole of 31 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)
Prohibited Uses	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No