

HO86

3.22 Bruce Court, Elsternwick

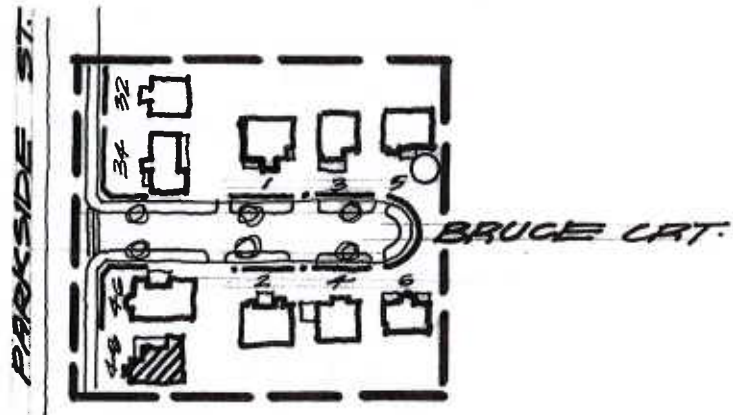
3.22.1 Description

This subdivision occupies the whole of Bruce Court serving six houses and nos. 32-34 and nos.46-48 Parkside Street, Elsternwick, being a total of ten houses. Elements that contribute to the Garden Suburb character of the subdivision include the low cement faced front fences matching the cement faced walls of the houses. Some of the crossings are coupled and each house is separated from its neighbour by a low fence extending back from the frontage to the street façade alignment. At the end of the court the last two allotments, nos. 5 and 6, have been extended across the end of the court with low front fences forming a curve that follows the gutter alignment. It is a visually effective means of terminating the vista and demonstrates the pre-occupation of the developer with the street environment, this treatment comparing with that of Dickson and Yorston's Rothesay Avenue, Brighton (1927), George M. Hume's Linden Court, Windsor (1928) and A. V. Jennings's Beauville Avenue, Murrumbidgee (1934-36). At the entrance to the court, the garden gates are located on the corner splays, thereby giving emphasis to the point of entry in the manner of the period. The side boundary fences to the corner houses facing Parkside Street are higher to afford privacy to their back yards. They constitute discordant elements in an otherwise carefully contrived garden landscape. The carriageway is asphalt paved, the footpaths concrete and the power lines, though overhead, are obscured by the mature liquid ambers in Bruce Court. The crossing with Parkside Street is pitched.

The houses are built as single storeyed villas in the Spanish Mission, Classical Revival and Bungalow styles. With the exception of the English Domestic Revival house at no. 34 Parkside Street they adopt a common vocabulary made up of plastered wall surfaces, shady porches, wing walls to the side boundary fences, lead lit windows, cement or variegated terra cotta tiled roofs and car ports with column supports. The latter represent extensions of the villas themselves and constitute enhancing elements unlike the garages of other comparable subdivisions including Dickson and Yorston's Lempriere Avenue, East St. Kilda (1927). Stylistic elements enabling one house to be distinguished from the next include the use of the Palladian window motif, arched loggias with spiral columns and serpentine parapets in the Spanish Mission and Mediterranean styles, symmetrical facades imparting Classical Revival character, flat roofed window bays and jerkin head roofs. There are sympathetic additions to the houses at nos. 1 and 5 and a principal window to the house at no. 46 Parkside Street has been changed. No. 34 is distinguished from the other Bruce Court houses not only by virtue of its style but by the use of clinker bricks, with herring bone panels in the gable end and chimney. They were hallmarks of the English Domestic Revival style that followed on from the styles of the Bruce Court houses as the Depression years receded in the early 'thirties.

3.22.2 Historical Background

Bruce Court is located on land alienated as Crown allotment no.37 to the grantee John Allee, of Brighton, in 1856-57. It was subdivided in the early 1860s, most of the land being acquired by Francis John Sidney Stephen, a lawyer, who had built his house "Bureel" there by 1866. Parkside Street was formed in 1895, during the late Boom



BRUCE COURT elsternwick

LEGEND:



CONTRIBUTORY
BUILDING (post-Federation
shown hatched)



NON-CONTRIBUTORY
BUILDING



CONTRIBUTORY
FRONT FENCE



HERITAGE
OVERLAY
AREA BOUNDARY



Bruce Court, south side, showing the low cement faced front fences, villas and garden street environment.

period, with large residential allotments on its east side¹. Each block had a depth of 287 feet and five houses had been erected there by this time, the southernmost allotment, possibly encompassing the future site of Bruce Court, being occupied by Shaw's dairy.

By 1910, stables had been erected on this land with an A.F. Cameron in occupancy as caretaker². "Miranda", the extant timber house at no. 48, had also been built by this time, both properties being owned in 1925 by the local merchant Albert E. McLaughlin and the plumber, Charles Shuell respectively³. Within two years, the real estate agency of William White and Sons, established in 1888, has purchased both blocks in the names of the brothers William Marshall White and Frederick Vincent White. The combined dimensions of their purchases was 276 feet by 287 feet and they subdivided them into ten allotments facing Parkside Street and the newly formed Bruce Court. "Miranda" was retained on a reduced land area and occupied by family member William Reginald White, secretary.

Building permits were obtained for all of the houses in Bruce Court in 1928-29 by the Whites, trading variously as William White and Sons, builders, F.V. White, contractor, W.M.E. White and R. White, builder⁴. A building permit was issued for no. 46 Parkside Street in 1928, also to the White's design, whilst the houses at nos. 32 and 34 Parkside Street were built in 1931 and 1933 respectively. No. 32 was built by Arthur Shaw and no. 34 to the design of the Elsternwick architect R.B. Hocking⁵, by which time the Whites had presumably moved on to new ventures.

3.22.3 Schedule of Contributory Places

The following places contribute to the cultural significance of the Area:

- Nos. 1, 2,3,4,5,6, Bruce Court.
- Nos. 32,34,46,48 Parkside Street.

3.22.4 Statement of Significance

The Bruce Court estate of William White and Sons off Parkside Street, Elsternwick, was formed in 1927 and developed by them in 1928-29 with nos. 32-34 Parkside Street being undertaken by others in 1931-33 and "Miranda" at no. 48 predating the subdivision but incorporated in it. It is historically and aesthetically significant. It is historically significant (Criterion A) as a very early subdivision demonstrating the planning principals of the Garden Suburb Movement in the highly sophisticated manner of the late 1920s. These principals include the treatment of the street and residential front gardens as a single garden landscape exemplified by the use of low front and side fences, coupled crossings, uniform street tree plantings, 45 degree corner splays at the entry to the court and a curved wall closing the vista at the far end. The historic importance of the subdivision rests also on the fact that the houses built by the Whites and which constitute the principal elements of the place post date

¹ Sands and McDougall directories, 1895.

² Idem, 1910.

³ Rate books, 1925-26.

⁴ See Building Surveyor's records, City of Glen Eira

⁵ Idem.



Bruce Court, looking east from Parkside Street. The house on the left was built in 1933, some four years after the completion of the subdivision.



The east end of the court, showing the curved garden walls and nature strips terminating the carriageway.



North side villas, showing the low side boundary fences between allotments

the earliest comparable subdivision undertaken by the better known estate developers Dickson and Yorston Pty. Ltd. in St. Kilda East by only a year. Bruce Court compares chronologically also with Linden Court, Windsor (1928) and Crompton Court, Caulfield South (1929) whilst others of similar urban character were to follow. The survival of “Miranda” is of historic interest as the house that preceded the development of the court but survives as evidence of this earlier time. The blocks on which the houses of the early ‘thirties facing Parkside Street are located formed part of the original estate and are of historic interest in this respect. No. 34 is of importance also as it marks the entry to the court, together with no.48.

The subdivision is of aesthetic importance (Criterion E) not only for its Garden Suburb character but also for the manner in which the Whites’ houses, though stylistically diverse in the manner of the period, use a common architectural vocabulary that imparts aesthetic unity to the court. In this respect the place epitomizes the qualities that distinguish the Garden Suburb Movement in metropolitan Melbourne during the late 1920s.

3.22.5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the entire Area be included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Glen Eira Planning Scheme with the requirement that proposals to alter front and side fences be advertised prior to consideration by Council.