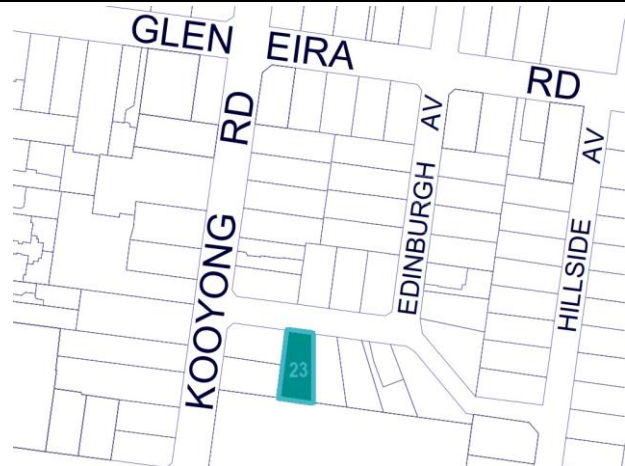


<b>IDENTIFIER</b>	HOUSE	<b>Citation No</b>	PW11
<b>Other name/s</b>	Shillabeer House (former)	<b>Melway ref</b>	67 K2
<b>Address</b>	23 Edinburgh Avenue CAULFIELD	<b>Date/s</b>	1958
<b>Designer/s</b>	Montgomery, King & Trengove	<b>Builder/s</b>	F E Shillabeer & Sons Pty Ltd?



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, June 2019



Location map and extent of HO

<b>Heritage Category</b>	Residential building (private) House	<b>Condition</b>	Excellent
		<b>Intactness</b>	Excellent
<b>Thematic context</b>	6.7 Making homes for Victorians		
<b>Recommendation</b>	Include on heritage overlay schedule as an individual heritage place		
<b>Controls</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

The former Shillabeer House at 23 Edinburgh Avenue, Caulfield, is a single-storey brick house in the Melbourne Regional style, with an elongated L-shaped plan, low gabled roof (enveloping a timber-posted carport to one side), extensive window walls and a recessed courtyard enclosed by a hit-and-miss brick wall. Erected in 1958 for Frank Shillabeer, the third generation of a family of prominent Melbourne builders, the house was designed by Montgomery, King & Trengove and most likely erected by Shillabeer's firm.

The significant fabric is defined as the exterior of the entire building.

### *How is it significant?*

The house satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

### *Why is it significant?*

The house is aesthetically significant as an excellent and substantially intact example of a house in the so-called Melbourne Regional style associated with the younger generation of locally-trained architects who commenced practice in the later 1940s and early 1950s. With its elongated L-shaped plan form, low gabled roof, broad eaves and full-height window walls, the house demonstrates the principal characteristics of this relaxed sub-style of post-WW2 modernism, coupled with some more distinctive features such as the recessed courtyard enclosed by screen wall of hit-and-miss brickwork, and the large opening in the carport roof. While the City of Glen Eira contains a high proportion of post-WW2 houses in the academic modernist style, many of which were designed by European-trained émigré architects, this is one of relatively few examples of the more relaxed modernist style adopted by younger locally-trained architects in the 1950s and early '60s.

(Criterion E)

### **History**

The house at 23 Edinburgh Avenue, Caulfield, was built in 1958 for builder Frank Shillabeer and his wife, to a design by the architectural firm of Montgomery, King & Trengove. Born in Caulfield, Frank Alexander Shillabeer (1926-2000) represented the third generation of a family of noted Melbourne builders. The business was founded by his grandfather, Frank Ernest Shillabeer, who was described in an obituary as “a building contractor of wide repute” (*Argus* 24/11/1949:5). In 1925, the thriving firm was reconfigured as F E Shillabeer & Sons Pty Ltd, acknowledging the involvement of Frank’s two sons, Frederick and Roy. During the inter-war years, the firm’s profile increased with the completion of some major city projects such as Harry Norris’s much-published *Nicholas Building* in Swanston Street (1926). Roy’s son, Frank Alexander, seems to have joined the family firm in the early post-WW2 era, following a stint with the RAN in which he served aboard the *SS Monterey*, a former ocean liner repurposed as a troop carrier, from 1945 and 1947. After Roy Shillabeer’s death in 1952, his brother Frederick retired to Surfers Paradise, evidently leaving the control of F E Shillabeer & Sons in the hand of the next generation. Around 1960, the company vacated its longtime city headquarters at 328 Flinders Lane and relocated to Footscray, apparently ceasing operation within a few years.

After marrying in 1949, Frank Shillabeer and his wife initially resided with his parents in Howitt Road, Caulfield. Intending to build a house for themselves, the younger couple was drawn to Edinburgh Avenue, a new L-shaped thoroughfare created in 1957 as part of the subdivision of a former stately home site on the south-east corner of Glen Eira and Kooyong Roads. In January 1958, the Shillabeers acquired the title to Lot 32, a north-facing block on the south side of the east-west portion of Edinburgh Avenue. To design the new house, the couple turned to architects Montgomery, King & Trengove.

The partnership of Montgomery, King & Trengove was founded in 1953 by Neil Edward Thomas Montgomery (1924-1995), Thomas Lionel King (1924-2001) and Robert Roff Trengove (1925-2010), three returned servicemen who had commenced architectural studies at Melbourne University in 1946 and, after collaborating on a final year design project, decided to enter into partnership upon graduation. This plan, however, was delayed by the need to obtain professional experience: Montgomery travelled overseas, while King and Trengove found work in the office of Yuncken Freeman Brothers, Griffiths & Simpson. After entering into partnership, Montgomery, King & Trengove quickly established a reputation for buildings in a hard-edged academic modernist style that reflected their collective interest in the work of Niemeyer, Mies and Breuer. While Trengove left the partnership in 1955, it retained its original name for another decade. Initially focusing on residential and small-scale retail jobs, the firm later embraced larger institutional and commercial projects. After Montgomery left in 1985, the practice was carried on by King until 1994, when it was taken over by his daughter and son-in-law, Bridget and Geoff Sneath. The firm continued as King & Sneath until the couple retired in the early 2000s.

The house that Montgomery, King & Trengove designed for the Shillabeer family, as depicted in working drawings dated March 1958, was a single-storey hip-roofed dwelling on an L-shaped linear plan that provided a large front living room, kitchen, laundry and three bedrooms along one side, and a projecting rear wing with master bedroom, dressing room and en suite bathroom. The recessed western half of the house also incorporated a carport that doubled as an entry porch, with a semi-enclosed sun terrace.

As it turned out, the Shillabeers resided in Edinburgh Avenue for only a very brief period. In 1960 (presumably coinciding with the relocation of the building business from the city to Footscray), the house was sold and the family moved to Beaumaris. Their former Caulfield residence was purchased by a company director and his German-born wife, who would remain living there for two decades. In 1983, the next owner engaged local architect David Edelman to undertake some minor changes to the house that included the refurbishment of the kitchen and laundry, incorporating a new breakfast nook, and addition of a small enclosed entry foyer at the far end of the carport. This entry foyer has evidently since been removed.

The house was one of ten local houses to be shortlisted for possible inclusion in *Notable & Modern*, an exhibition of post-war domestic architecture in the City of Glen Eira, held at the Glen Eira Art Gallery in 2001. Although ultimately not included in the exhibition, it was noted of these ten houses that “their exclusion from the project in no way meant that they were not interesting”.

## Description

The former Shillabeer House at 23 Edinburgh Avenue, Caulfield, is a single-storey gable-roofed brick house in the post-WW2 modernist style. Laid out on an elongated L-shaped plan, the house presents an asymmetrical elevation to the street, with a fully glazed window wall to the left half and a recessed carport to the right, enclosed on the west side by a solid brick wall and along the south side by a matching but slightly lower hit-and-miss screen wall. The carport is integrated beneath the broad gabled roof, which incorporates an unusual elongated rectangular opening near the apex, with a row of slender columns along the downward side. The window wall to the front of the house, which comprises wide single-pane windows, highlights and glazed sliding doors, opened onto a sundeck.

## Comparisons

The house at 23 Edinburgh Road falls neatly into a specific sub-group of post-WW2 modernism that is generally referred to as the Melbourne Regional style. Defined by Richard Apperly *et al* as “a palatable, friendly brand of modernism which was not a wishy-washy compromise”, the Melbourne Regional style was typified by single-storey suburban dwellings that, with low gabled roofs and linear plans, evoked an “unassertive horizontality”. Other defining characteristics cited by Apperly include broad eaves, window walls with regular spaced mullions, and timber-posted verandahs. The style tends to be associated with an emerging generation of younger Melbourne architects, often (but not always) returned servicemen who completed architectural studies in the late 1940s and early 1950s, such as Robin Boyd, Neil Clerehan, Peter McIntyre and Don Fulton.

The City of Glen Eira, and especially the Caulfield area, contains a high proportion of post-WW2 modernist houses designed by émigré architects who typically adopted in an academic modernist idiom. However, counterparts in the more relaxed Melbourne Regional style, designed by these younger locally-trained architects, are less common, and tend to be found elsewhere in the study area (such as Bentleigh and Elsternwick). One notably early manifestation is a house at 56 Thomas Street, Bentleigh (Neil Clerehan, 1950-51), with its elongated linear plan, north-facing window wall and jaunty skillion roofline with timber-posted carport on the south side.

A larger and grander example, formerly standing at 3-5 Buckingham Avenue, Bentleigh (Grounds, Romberg & Boyd, 1956), had an elongated F-shaped plan spread horizontally across a double-width block, defining a semi-enclosed front courtyard and a twin carport at one end. With its low skillion roof, window walls and vertical timber board cladding, it was probably the finest remaining example of the Melbourne Regional style in the City of Glen Eira, prior to its demolition as recently as 2013.

A skillion-roofed two-storey painted brick house in the Melbourne Regional style, still standing at 4 Elizabeth Street, Elsternwick (Richard Berryman, 1957), is perhaps less directly comparable to the Shillabeer House, but has some broad similarities in its narrow rectangular plan, timber-posted balcony/verandah, and full-height window bays to each level. Outside of the purely residential sphere, comparisons might also be drawn with a domestically-scaled medical clinic at 74a Orrong Road, Elsternwick (Albert Ross, 1961), which is similarly expressed with a broad gabled roof, wide eaves, full-height window wall, but further enlivened by the eye-catching motif of a triangulated lattice screen across the street frontage.

### References

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Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture* (1989), pp 218-221.

Simon Reeves, "Montgomery, King & Trengove", in Philip Goad & Julie Willis (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture* (2012), p 468.

### Identified by

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