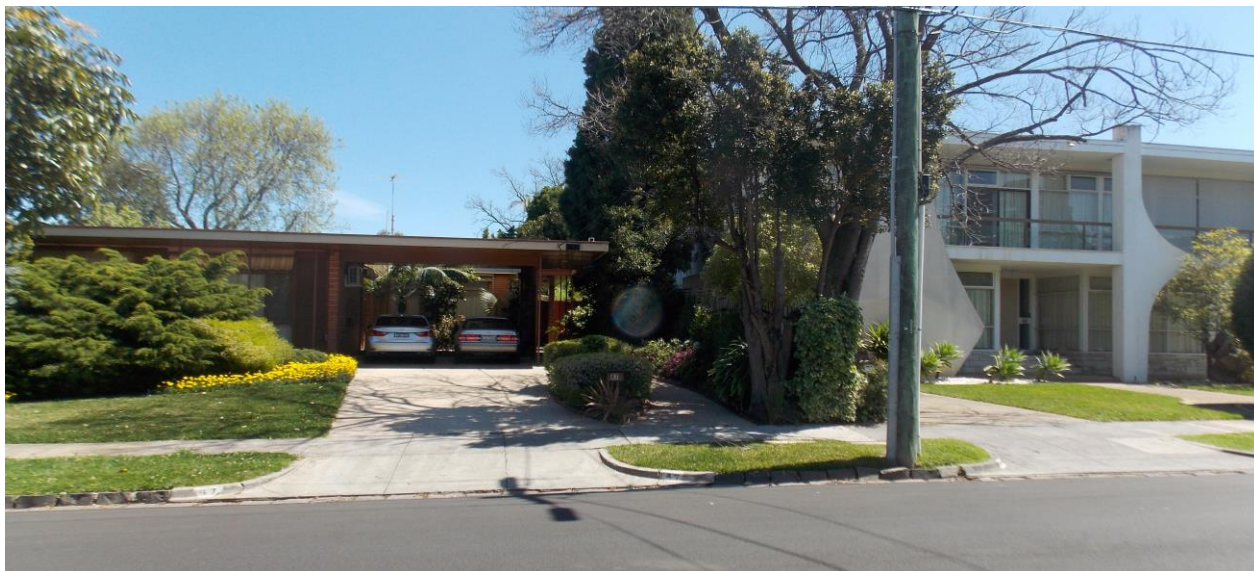
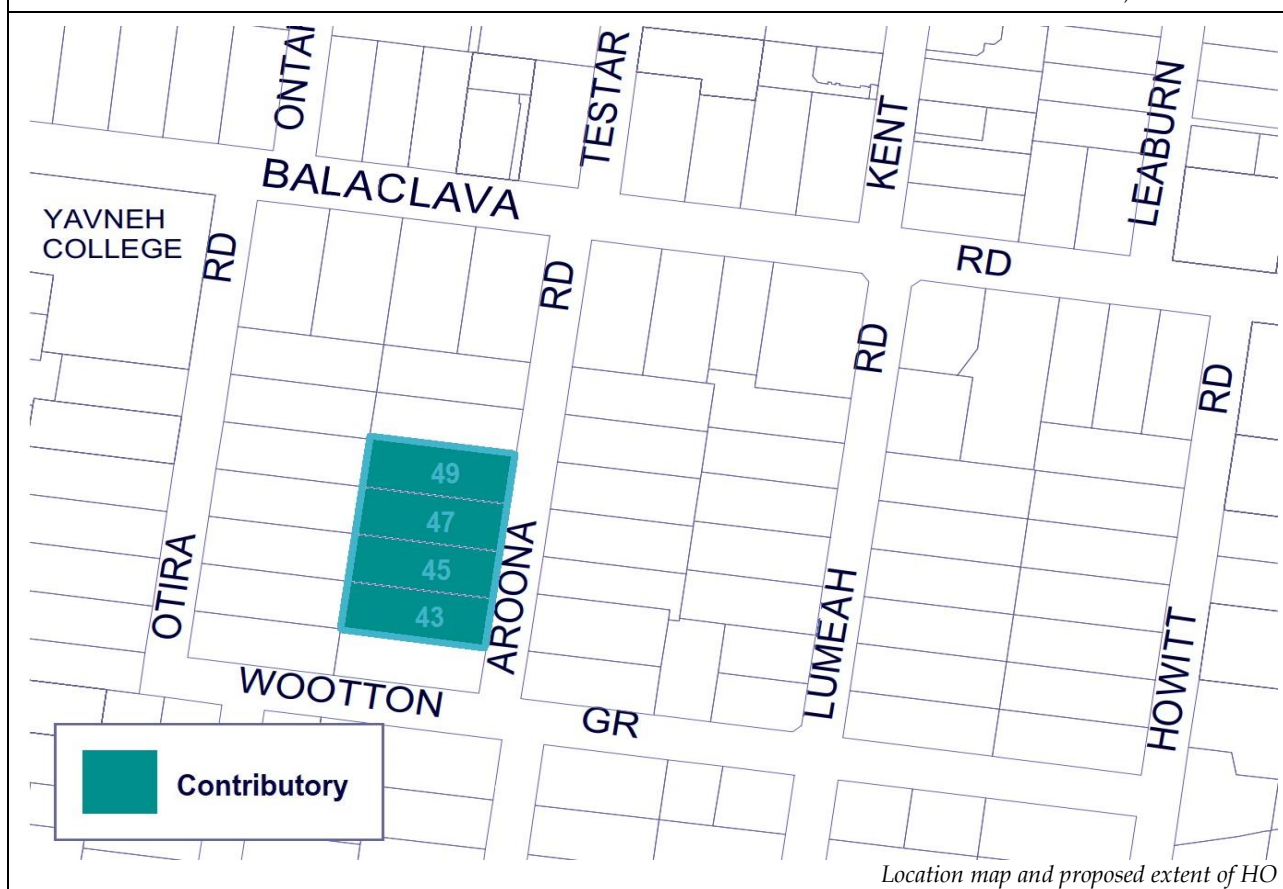


IDENTIFIER	AROONA ROAD MODERNIST PRECINCT	Citation No	P01
Other name/s		Melway ref	58 H12
Address	43-49 Aroona Road CAULFIELD NORTH	Date/s	1961- 63, 1970-71



Houses at 47 and 49 Aroona Road, October 2019



Location map and proposed extent of HO

Heritage Group	Residential building (private)	Condition	Excellent
Heritage Category	Residential precinct	Intactness	Excellent
Recommendation	Include on heritage overlay schedule as a heritage precinct		
Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration	<input type="checkbox"/> Trees

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct comprises a cohesive row of four post-WW2 houses at the northern end of Aroona Road, Caulfield North, erected between 1961 and 1971. Although quite differently articulated, the four houses are all designed in a consistent European Modernist style characterised by bold rectilinear massing, flat roofs with broad eaves, and expansive windows. Commissioned by European émigré families who engaged architects of similar background (two houses designed by Austrian-trained Ernest Fooks and two by Polish-born Holgar & Holgar).

The following houses are deemed to be *contributory* elements in the precinct:

- Aroona Road: Nos 43, 45, 47, 49

How is it significant?

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of Glen Eira's cultural history.
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
- Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in our history.

Why is it significant?

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant for associations with post-WW2 redevelopment of the former *Talbot Estate*, a prestigious inter-war subdivision that was transformed from the mid-1950s as original houses were replaced by grander modernist counterparts, mostly built by well-off European émigré families who commissioned architects of similar background. As these large and prepossessing modern houses proliferated in the 1960s, '70s and into the '80s and beyond, the area acquired an envied reputation as Caulfield's "Golden Mile". (*Criterion A*)

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant as small but excellent collection of post-WW2 modernist houses. Designed by architects who were born and trained in Continental Europe, the houses are unified by a consistent hard-edged modernist style associated with such designers, broadly characterised by bold rectilinear massing, flat roofs with broad eaves, and expansive windows. This is tempered by more unusual forms and detailing that reflect each architects' gradual departure from academic modernism towards a more idiosyncratic approach. The house that Fooks designed at No 43 (1963) shows the emerging influence of Japanese architecture that he saw during a recent trip overseas, while the canted façade of the early Holgar & Holgar house at No 45 (1963) hints at the unusual geometry that would so strongly define the firm's later work, typified by the house at No 49 (1970-71), with its eye-catching façade elements. (*Criterion E*)

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct is significant for associations with two leading post-WW2 émigré architectural practices that each maintained an important and enduring connection with what is now the City of Glen Eira. Czechoslovakian-born and Austrian-trained Ernest Fooks began practice in Melbourne in 1948 and, after designing his first building in Caulfield in 1951, completed many more over the ensuing quarter-century, including his own celebrated residence in Howitt Road. Holgar & Holgar, comprising Polish couple John & Helen Holgar, launched their practice after winning a high-profile exhibition house competition in 1957 (the outcome of which was relocated to a site in Bentleigh East), and remained similarly active in the study area from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. While Fooks and the Holgars undertook much residential work in what is now the City of Glen Eira, some of their most outstanding houses were to be found in this prestigious enclave loosely defined as Caulfield's "Golden Mile". (*Criterion H*)

History

Note: Identifying details of property owners and their families have been deleted as per Council direction

Aroona Road was created in 1912 as part of the *Talbot Estate*, a vast residential subdivision that extended south from Balaclava Road to Hume Road, creating nearly 200 allotments with frontages to Balaclava Road, Kooyong Road and the new north-south streets of Lumeah Road, Otira Road, Howitt Road and Aroona Road. The land was released in seven stages over the next five years, and by the time that the last 44 blocks were offered for sale at a “grand final auction” in November 1917, the area could be loftily promoted as “the famous Talbot Estate”, “a marine [sic] panorama of rare beauty and vast extent, with the clear line of the You Yang Ranges in the background, presenting a picture on a sunny day which will command the admiration and surprise of the seeker after specially choice and freehold sites” (*Argus* 03/11/1917:3).

Aroona Road was first recorded in the *Sands & McDougall Directory* in 1915, with a single entry for a “house being built” between Balaclava Road and Wootton Grove; rate books confirm this as a six-roomed timber dwelling on Lot 46 (47 Aroona Road). By 1920, the number of entries had increased to twenty-four, split fairly evenly between the east and west sides of the street, including five houses “being built”. The early residents of Aroona Road represented comfortably middle-class, white-collar families, with electoral rolls citing such occupations as civil servant, accountant, engineer, doctor, draper, manufacturer and detective. One resident, listed as being of “independent means”, hinted at the early presence of more affluent families. By the early 1920s, Aroona Road had certainly attracted some prominent Melburnians, such as former ANZAC commander Lieutenant-Colonel Vernon A H Sturdee and Dame Elizabeth Davies, widow of Sir Matthew Davies. Some of the early houses are known to have been designed by leading architects of the day such as Percy Oakley, who called tenders for a brick residence in Aroona Road in 1921 (*Age* 19/03/1921:21) and Marcus Barlow, who designed a pair of villas there as early as 1916 (*Age* 25/05/1916:3). By 1930, directory listings for Aroona Road had more than doubled to fifty, filling out the entire street save for a pair of vacant lots at Nos 7 and 9. By then, a decidedly more high-status demographic was evident amongst residents, with electoral rolls listing such professions as manager, company director, importer, investor, agent and, again, “independent means”.

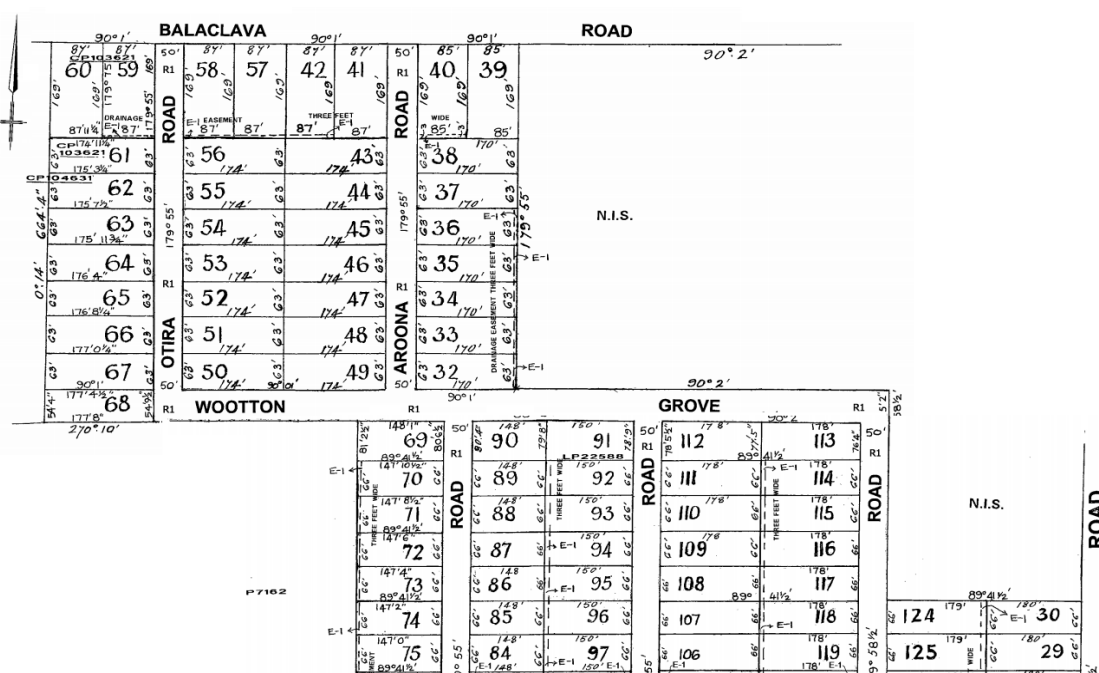


Figure 1: Excerpt of Lodged Plan No 6,109 (1913) showing northern portion of the *Talbot Estate*

Source: www.landata.com.au

Directory listings show that, by 1950, only about a third of Aroona Road's pre-war residents were still living there, including five widows. Over the next two decades, the streetscape would be fundamentally re-shaped as more original residents departed (in either sense) and a younger generation was drawn to the prestigious enclave, albeit not necessarily to its existing building stock. The post-WW2 transformation of Aroona Road effectively began in 1954, when the last remaining vacant block in the street, at No 7, was acquired by a Polish-born manufacturer who commissioned Austrian-trained architect Ernest Fooks to design a new house. This not only marked the start of the post-WW2 transformation of Aroona Road, but also of the significant two-pronged theme that would characterise it: the settlement of well-to-do European émigrés who invariably commissioned architects of similar background.

Not surprisingly, the post-WW2 redevelopment of Aroona Road initially focused on the northern (Balaclava Road) end, where the oldest houses were located. On the west side of the street, the block between Wootton and Balaclava Roads included four houses (Nos 43-49) that dated back to the initial settlement of the *Talbot Estate* in the late teens, including the one at No 47 that (erected circa 1915) had been the first house in the street. In the early 1960s, three of these early houses would be razed and replaced in fairly rapid succession by larger and grander counterparts in the modernist style, all designed by European émigré architects.

The first of these, erected at No 43 for (and presumably by) Polish-born builder Leopold Getreu, was designed by Ernest Fooks, who, in 1954, had been responsible for the new house at No 7. This was merely a coincidence, as Getreu had an important prior association with the architect: he was the contractor of record for several Fooks projects in the 1950s, notably the Mount Scopus War Memorial College in Burwood, designed in association with Anatol Kagan and completed in several stages from 1951 to 1960. While unconfirmed, Fooks probably designed Getreu's previous residence at 28 Ontario Street: a cream brick modernist house of similar form to a confirmed (but since demolished) Fooks house next door, at No 26. In any case, Getreu's new house in Aroona Road, for which working drawings are dated November 1961, was suitably grand for a builder's own home: a large and partly split-level brick dwelling that opened to a rear swimming pool area. The following year, Fooks would be commissioned by another Polish émigré to design a house only two doors away, at No 47. Working drawings, dated August 1962, proposed a single-storey flat-roofed brick house on a stepped plan, with a capacious living area and sunroom opening onto a north-facing terrace.

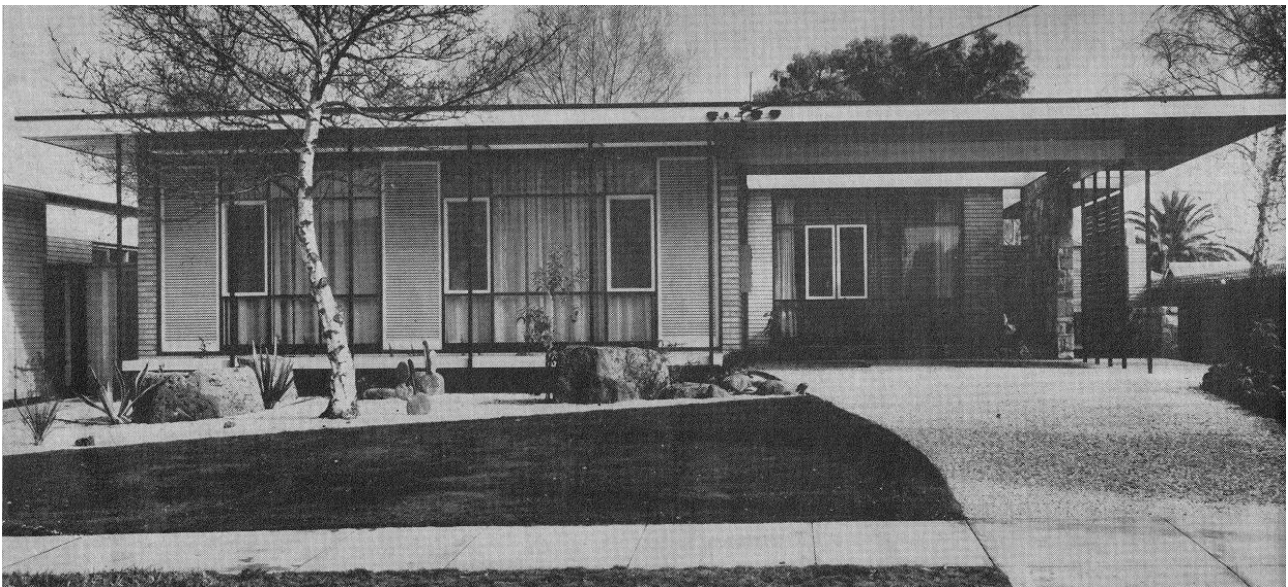


Figure 2: The house at 47 Aroona Road, Caulfield, photographed in 1965
Source: *Australian House & Garden*, January 1966.



Figure 3: The Japanese-style front garden at 47 Aroona Road, photographed in 1965
Source: *Australian House & Garden*, Jan 1966



Figure 4: An undated but early photograph of the house at 49 Aroona Road
Source: Holgar & Holgar Archive

In April 1963, the pre-war weatherboard dwelling at No 45, forlornly wedged between the two recently-completed Ernest Fooks houses, was acquired by a company director and his wife (Certificate of Title 4503/534). The couple, who had previously resided in a stylish modernist block of flats at 124 Balaclava Road, proceeded to have plans for a new residence drawn up by Holgar & Holgar, a sought-after Collins Street practice comprising the Polish-born husband-and-wife team of John and Helen Holgar. The architects, known for their idiosyncratic style, proposed a house on a sprawling single-storey plan, with an unusual canted façade and stone-clad carport, and a U-shaped rear terrace of curvilinear form. The company director and his wife resided in the new house for only a brief period; in 1966, the property was acquired by a Polish-born wholesaler, whose brother and sister-in-law just happened to live next door at No 47.

The new residential development along Aroona Road garnered press attention as early as 1965, when the Fooks-designed house at No 47 appeared in the architectural column of the *Herald*, in which it was reported to show “some resemblance to the restrained and carefully proportioned Japanese house” (*Herald*, 12/02/1965:23). This was a telling allusion, given that Fooks had only recently returned from an overseas trip (including Japan) at the time that the house was commissioned. The observation would be echoed when the house was belatedly profiled in the *Australian House & Garden* early the following year, with a full-colour front cover photograph and a four-page feature article within. With the house lauded as “a treasury of good, practical ideas”, attention was drawn to overt Japanese influences that included a minimalist interior of shoji screens and built-in furniture (designed by Fooks himself) and, outside, an orientalised front garden with pebbled beds, feature boulders and low plantings of cacti and succulents.

Towards the end of 1966, opportunity for further redevelopment in this part of Aroona Road arose following the death of the longtime resident who had lived at No 49 since the early 1920s. Belatedly offered for sale in 1970, his former home was advertised as “a large brick house of seven fine rooms”, with “a spacious well-planned interior ideally suited for imaginative modernization”. Its new owners, a Czechoslovakian-born clothing manufacturer and his wife, clearly had “imaginative modernization” in mind when they engaged architects Holgar & Holgar (who had designed the nearby house at No 45) to design a grand new house for the site. Working drawings, dated, November 1970, proposed a large two-storey house with entry foyer, maid’s quarters and other service areas at the lower level and the principal living spaces upstairs. Construction commenced early the next year, when a notice in a newspaper column advertised for “building material: brick house being demolished at 49 Aroona Road, Caulfield (*Age* 13/02/1971:101).

The families that occupied these four adjacent houses by 1971 would also continue to live there for many years. The two Polish brothers at Nos 45 and 47 remained next-door neighbours into the 1990s, while the Czech businessman at No 49 resided there until his death in the early 2010s.

By the mid-1970s, this part of Caulfield had acquired such a reputation as a prestigious residential area that estate agents had begun to refer to it as the “Golden Mile” (*Age* 13/11/1976:38). Initially, this term seems to have been rather loosely applied to properties located anywhere in the area bounded by Inkerman Road, Glen Eira Road, Orrong Road and Hawthorn Road. From the 1980s, however, it tended to be applied more selectively, with properties in Aroona, Howitt and Lumeah Roads regularly promoted as being “in the heart of the Golden Mile” (*Age* 01/12/1993:77).

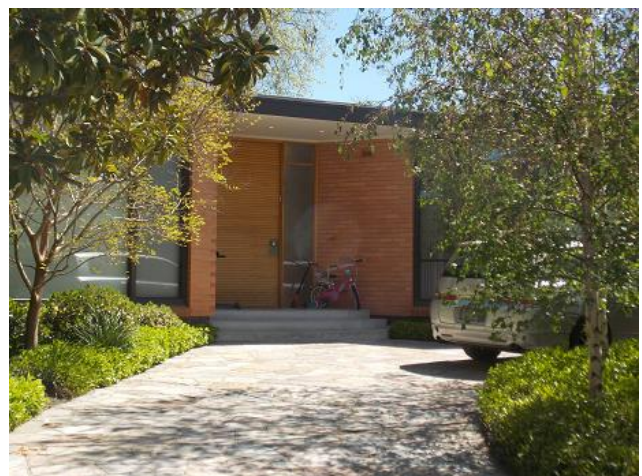
Description

The Aroona Road Modernist Precinct comprises a row of four detached flat-roofed brick houses in the post-WW2 modernist style, three of which (Nos 43, 45 and 47) were erected between 1961 and 1963, and the fourth (No 49) in 1970-71. Typical of that period (and of the work of their respective European trained architects), all four houses are expressed with a bold rectilinear massing of intersecting box-like volumes, forming asymmetrical facades. The houses at No 43 and 47 (both by Ernest Fooks) incorporate projecting/recessing bays, albeit differently articulated: the former has a projecting two-storey wing with enclosed garage at the lower level, while the latter incorporates an open carport into the recessed northern end. The houses at Nos 45 and 49 (both by Holgar & Holgar) are more idiosyncratic: the former has a canted façade with two angled walls flanking an off-centre entry porch, while the latter expresses its upper level as an elongated horizontal volume, hovering above a slightly recessed lower level.

The houses are of brick construction: the three earlier ones (Nos 43, 45 and 47) in orange-coloured face brickwork and the later one (No 49) with a rendered finish. Two houses are further enlivened by feature stonework, to the carport wing wall (No 47) and ground floor plinth (No 49). All four houses have flat roofs with broad eaves. At No 47, eaves merge into the carport roof (penetrated by a large skylight) and are supported on metal pipe columns to form a narrow colonnaded porch across the street frontage. At No 49, the eaves link with a wing wall and projecting floor slab to define a frame to three sides of the upstairs balcony. All four houses have expansive windows to the street, with continuous bays of multi-paned sashes that are variously full-width (No 43), full-height (No 45 and 47), or both (No 49). At No 47, the glazed sashes alternate with tall louvred screens to form an oriental effect.



*Figure 5: The house at 43 Aroona Road
(Ernest Fooks, 1961)*



*Figure 6: The house at 45 Aroona Road
(Holgar & Holgar, 1963)*



*Figure 7: The house at 47 Aroona Road
(Ernest Fooks, 1962)*



*Figure 8: The house at 49 Aroona Road
(Holgar & Holgar, 1970-71)*

There is some variation in the articulation of front entrances. No 43 has a small flat-roofed front porch set into the junction of the two front bays, while the entrance to No 47 is entirely concealed, set into a side wall towards rear and accessed via a covered walkway alongside the carport. At Nos 43 and 49, the front doors are set into recessed alcoves in the street facades, albeit differently expressed as an off-centre angled alcove (No 45) and a centrally-placed rectilinear alcove (No 49). A particularly distinctive feature of the latter house is the curving T-shaped structural element and faceted polygon motif that flank the main entry.

Comparable in setback, the four houses are enhanced by their settings: two with front lawns and feature garden beds (No 47, 49) and two with expansive areas of dense low plantings (No 43, 45). Wide driveways have crazy paving (No 45) or a pebbled concrete finish (Nos 43, 47 and 49); two houses have matching concrete paths (No 47, 49) and another (No 43) has a flagstone path.

Comparisons

The transformation of Aroona Road from a streetscape of pre-war villas and bungalows into a more prestigious enclave of larger and grander modernist residences is demonstrated by a number of scattered houses from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s that survive among a subsequent layer of residential redevelopment from the 1980s onwards. The former Bryon House at 7 Aroona Road (Ernest Fooks, 1954), which effectively kick-started the post-WW2 re-shaping of the streetscape, still stands but has been significantly altered in recent years. The three extant and intact houses at Nos 43, 45 and 47, erected between 1961 and 1963, represent the next earliest surviving examples.

Other houses in Aroona Road tend to be somewhat later, dating from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. These include, in chronological order, those examples at No 32 (Robert Cutts, 1963), No 30 (Michael R E Feldhagen, 1963), No 24 (Harry Ernest, 1966), No 35 (Terry Holt, 1967), No 33 (Harry Ernest, 1967), No 27 (John Thompson, 1968), No 31 (Sina Lenko, c1971) and No 20 (Kenneth Edelstein, c1972). These houses all appear to have been commissioned by European émigré clients, while virtually all of the designers (with the notable exception of Woodend-born John Thompson) were of similar background, either first generation migrants born and trained over there (eg Feldhagen from Germany; Cutts from Austria and Lenko from parts unknown, perhaps Yugoslavia) or second-generation migrants (eg Edelstein and Ernest) who qualified in Melbourne. A few of the houses, such as Nos 27, 35 and 30, are individually notable while others, such as Nos 24 and 33, tend to be more representative of the era or of their architect's work in general.

This pattern of settlement was not only evident in Aroona Road but also in the parallel streets that comprised the *Talbot Estate*. In Howitt Road, post-WW2 modernist houses were dominated by the work of Ernest Fooks, whose own residence at No 32 (1963), virtually unaltered when his widow died in 2012, has since been added to the *Victorian Heritage Register*. Fooks was also responsible for the houses at Nos 39 (1952), 43 (1965) and 27 (1978), although the two earlier ones have since been demolished and the later one is in a peculiarly neo-classical style that is far removed from Fooks' early work in the modernist vein. While a striking modernist house at 18 Howitt Road (Holgar & Holgar, 1969) has been altered beyond recognition, that firm's work is otherwise well represented in nearby Lumeah Road, with an excellent two-storey residence at No 82 (1972) and a more modest single-storey one at No 72 (1988), designed for the same clients who commissioned the Howitt Road house two decades earlier. Fooks was responsible for at least three houses in Lumeah Road, at Nos 49 (1967), 13 (1969) and 42 (c1971), while other architects are represented by No 52 (Bernard Slawik, 1967), 53 (Sol Sapir, c1971), 58 (Kurt Elsner, 1967), 70 (Joshua & Mary Pila, 1975) and 78 (Robert Knott, 1963). As is the case in both Aroona Road and Howitt Road, some of these Lumeah Road houses have been demolished (eg Nos 53 and 78), and those that remain include a few individually notable specimens (eg Nos 58 and 82) among others that, while intact and evocative, tend to be more representative of the era.

While the streets within the former *Talbot Estate* contain some notable specimens of post-WW2 architect-designed dwellings, invariably commissioned by European émigré clients from designers of similar background, they tend to survive as scattered individual specimens rather than as a cohesive streetscape. The row of four houses at 43-49 Aroona Road not only stands out as the most expansive remaining group, but also for the inclusion of some of the earliest houses (circa early 1960s) demonstrative of this pattern of re-development.

References

Lodged Plan No 6,109, dated 1 July 1913.

The Office of Dr Ernest Fooks, "Brick residence, 43 Aroona Road, Caulfield, for Mr & Mrs L Getreu", working drawings, dated November 1961. City of Caulfield Permit No 27,703.

The Office of Dr Ernest Fooks, "Brick residence, No 47 Aroona Road, Caulfield, for Mr & Mrs [redacted]", working drawings, dated 20 August 1962. City of Caulfield Permit No 28,888.

Holgar & Holgar, "Proposed new residence for [redacted]", at No 45 Aroona Road, Caulfield", working drawings, dated 1963. City of Caulfield Permit No 24,297.

Holgar & Holgar, "Residence for [redacted]", 49 Aroona Road, Caulfield", working drawings, dated 10 November 1970. City of Caulfield Permit No 40,294.

"Japanese style for Caulfield House", *Herald*, 12 February 1965, p 23.

"West blends with east in a great home of ideas", *Australian House & Garden*, January 1966, pp 10-11, 58-59.

Simon Reeves, "Gold-plated doors if you want them: Holgar & Holgar and the Architecture of Opulence," in Ann Marie Brennan & Philip Goad (eds), *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia & New Zealand*. Vol 33 (Melbourne, 2016), pp 568-577.

Identified by

Built Heritage Pty Ltd

(No 47 also identified individually by Heritage Alliance and Glen Eira Historical Society)