

SECCULL HOUSE



2021 Seccull House



c1972 Seccull House - The
Lifework of Guilford Bell



2021 Seccull Hous



2021 Seccull House 2



c1972 Architecture of Guilford
Bell



c1972 Seccull family
Bell



c1972 - Seccull family

DIAGRAM 2406



DIAGRAM 2406



Seccull House - aerial diagram

Location

32 NORTH ROAD BRIGHTON, BAYSIDE CITY

Municipality

BAYSIDE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

VHR Registration

November 25, 2021

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 25, 2021

What is significant?

Seccull House is a single-storey flat-roofed residence constructed in 1972 to a striking design by noted architect Guilford Bell for Elaine and William Seccull. The house, hidden from view behind a high perimeter wall, blends a modernist sensibility with distinct Classical and Middle Eastern influences. It is defined by its strong axial arrangement, with wings arranged in an F-shaped plan around internal courtyards. Its stark white walls, punctuated by black sliding doors and steel columns, create a strong visual impression.

How is it significant?

Seccull House is of architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Why is it significant?

Seccull House is architecturally significant as one of the most celebrated works of noted architect Guilford Bell. It is a highly distinctive, finely designed and substantial house of the era. Its restrained design features many of the characteristics for which Bell was best known, including strong axial planning, ritualised entries, harmonious proportions and the stark use of high-quality materials. Bell differed from his contemporaries in his formality, minimalism and integration of Classical and Middle Eastern influences in the modernist home. All these tendencies can be clearly discerned in the Seccull House. Elaine and William Seccull gave Bell complete control over the project, enabling him to demonstrate the full extent of his skills as a designer of houses. Bell later reflected that it was the most satisfactory commission of his entire career. (Criterion D)

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

Introduction

The purpose of this information is to assist owners and other interested parties when considering or making decisions regarding works to a registered place. It is recommended that any proposed works be discussed with an officer of Heritage Victoria prior to making a permit application. Discussing proposed works will assist in answering questions the owner may have and aid any decisions regarding works to the place.

It is acknowledged that alterations and other works may be required to keep places and objects in good repair and adapt them for use into the future. However, under the Act a person must not knowingly, recklessly or negligently remove, relocate or demolish, damage or despoil, develop or alter or excavate all or any part of any part of a registered place without approval. It should be noted that the definition of 'develop' in the Act includes any works on, over or under the place.

If a person wishes to undertake works or activities in relation to a registered place or registered object, they must apply to the Executive Director for a permit. The purpose of a permit is to enable appropriate change to a place and to effectively manage adverse impacts on the cultural heritage significance of a place as a consequence of change. If an owner is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that Heritage Victoria be contacted.

Permits are required for anything which alters the place or object, unless a permit exemption is granted. Permit exemptions usually cover routine maintenance and upkeep issues faced by owners as well as minor works or works to the elements of the place or object that are not significant. They may include appropriate works that are specified in a conservation management plan. Permit exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under section 38 of the Act) or after registration (under section 92 of the Act). It should be noted that the addition of new buildings to the registered place, as well as alterations to the interior and exterior of existing buildings requires a permit, unless a specific permit exemption is granted.

Disrepair of registered place or registered object

Under section 152 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not allow that place or object to fall into disrepair.

Failure to maintain registered place or registered object

Under section 153 of the Act, the owner of a registered place or registered object must not fail to maintain that place or object to the extent that its conservation is threatened.

Conservation management plans

It is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan is developed to manage the place in a manner which respects its cultural heritage significance.

Archaeology

There is no identified archaeology of State level significance at the place. However, any works that may affect historical archaeological features, deposits or artefacts at the place is likely to require a permit, permit exemption or consent. Advice should be sought from the Archaeology Team at Heritage Victoria.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

To establish whether this place is registered under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 please contact Aboriginal Victoria. The Heritage Act 2017 and the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 are separate pieces of legislation. Please be aware that both Acts are required to be satisfied and satisfying the requirements of one Act may not satisfy the

requirements of the other.

If any Aboriginal cultural heritage is discovered or exposed at any time it is necessary to immediately contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. If works are proposed which have the potential to disturb or have an impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage it is necessary to contact Aboriginal Victoria to ascertain any requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

Other approvals

Please be aware that approval from other authorities (such as local government) may be required to undertake works.

Notes

- All works should ideally be informed by a Conservation Management Plan prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.
- Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.
- Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits where applicable.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place.
- Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place are revealed which relate to the significance of the place, then the exemption covering such works must cease and Heritage Victoria must be notified as soon as possible.

PERMIT EXEMPTIONS

General

- Minor repairs and maintenance which replaces like with like. Repairs and maintenance must maximise protection and retention of significant fabric and include the conservation of existing details or elements. Any repairs and maintenance must not exacerbate the decay of fabric due to chemical incompatibility of new materials, obscure fabric or limit access to such fabric for future maintenance.
- Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing services such as plumbing, electrical cabling, surveillance systems, solar power infrastructure, pipes or fire services which does not involve changes in location or scale, or additional trenching.
- Repair to, or removal of, items such as antennae; aerials; and air conditioners and associated pipe work, ducting and wiring.
- Works or activities, including emergency stabilisation, necessary to secure safety in an emergency where a structure or part of a structure has been irreparably damaged or destabilised and poses a safety risk to its users or the public. The Executive Director must be notified within seven days of the commencement of these works or activities.
- Painting of previously painted external surfaces in the same colour, finish and product type provided that preparation or painting does not remove all evidence of earlier paint finishes or schemes. This exemption does not apply to areas which are currently unpainted.
- All usual domestic cleaning, plus cleaning to maintain exterior including the removal of surface deposits using low-pressure water, neutral detergents and brushing and scrubbing with plastic (not wire) brushes.

Interiors

- Painting of previously painted internal surfaces provided that preparation or painting does not remove all evidence of earlier paint finishes or schemes. This exemption does not apply to areas which are currently unpainted.

- Works to maintain or upgrade existing bathrooms, laundry and kitchen including installing new appliances, joinery, re-tiling and the like.
- Replacement of carpets.
- Replacement of travertine floor tiles like for like.
- Installation, removal or replacement of window furnishings.
- Removal, replacement or installation of new hooks, brackets and the like for hanging wall mounted artworks.
- Maintenance, repair and replacement of existing light fixtures and fittings.
- Installation, removal or replacement of existing electrical wiring, providing it is concealed.
- Installation, removal or replacement of light switches or power outlets.
- Installation, removal or replacement of smoke and fire detectors, alarms, speakers and the like.
- Repair, removal or replacement of existing ventilation, cooling and heating systems provided that the plant is concealed, and that the work is done in a manner which does not alter building fabric.
- Installation, removal or replacement of insulation in the roof space.

Landscape/outdoor areas

Hard landscaping and services

- Subsurface works to existing watering, utilities and drainage systems provided these do not involve trenching in new locations. Existing lawns, gardens and hard landscaping, including paving, are to be returned to the original configuration and appearance on completion of works.
- Like for like repair and maintenance of existing hard landscaping including paving and driveways where the materials, scale, form and design is unchanged from the original design. This exemption does not apply to the replacement of existing hard landscaping.
- Installation of physical barriers or traps to enable vegetation protection and management of vermin such as rats, mice and possums.
- Like for like repair and maintenance to the swimming pool and associated equipment.
- Works to and removal of inground trampoline and putting green and making good.

Gardening, trees and plants

- The processes of gardening including mowing, pruning, mulching, fertilising, removal of dead or diseased plant, replanting of existing garden beds, disease and weed control and maintenance to care for plants.
- Removal of tree seedlings and suckers without the use of herbicides.
- Management and maintenance of trees including formative and remedial pruning, removal of deadwood and pest and disease control.
- Emergency tree works where it is necessary to maintain safety or protect property.
- Removal of environmental and noxious weeds.

Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 9. Shaping cultural and creative life

Construction dates	1972,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	112134
Property Number	

History

Domestic architecture in Victoria in the 1960s-70s

Post-World War II architectural modernism had an impact on all fields of building design in Victoria. While various strands of modernism were explored in commercial and public buildings of all types, domestic architecture was an area in which modernist design was particularly skilfully expressed. In the post-war era, the single-family house became a key expression of Australian culture.^[1] In the immediate post-war years, innovation in housing design was driven by both a demand for new housing brought about by returned servicemen and immigration, and the post-war scarcity of building materials. In the 1950s, an Australian adaptation of International Modernism dominated with geometric forms, open plans and lightness of materials was frequently seen. During this era, notable architects such as Robin Boyd, Peter McIntyre and Neil Clerehan established their architectural practices and inspired public discussion of the possibilities of domestic architecture.

The leading figures in 1950s architecture in Victoria continued their impact through the 1960s and 1970s, and were joined by the next generation of architecture graduates, such as Daryl Jackson and Maggie Edmond. Influences on domestic architecture diversified. Organic architecture, New Brutalism, as well as movements in design from Japan, Scandinavia and the West Coast of the United States, all increasingly found expression in the architect designed residences and holiday homes of metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many architects working in Australia were inspired by the surrounding landscape, and rough-hewn timber, locally sourced stone, stepped floor plans integrated with steep sites, mezzanines and timber decks were often seen.^[2] Others pursued artifice and aesthetic intent.^[3] Several, Guilford Bell being among them, developed highly personal and identifiable styles that drew on influences beyond those of their contemporaries. Themes of the fusion of indoors and outdoors, integration with the site, enclosure and retreat and an emphasis on recreation were seen across homes that were otherwise stylistically diverse. The street-facing facade was de-emphasised in favour of providing a sense of privacy for residents, a tendency seen in Neil Clerehan's Fenner House (VHR H2350), which presents an almost entirely blank face to the street. Some architects moved away from the open plan of the 1950s to the restoration of separate rooms with specific purposes. Whether rigidly axial as in Bell's work, or organically irregular as in the work of Kevin Borland, spatial composition was accepted as the primary mode of architectural expression.^[4]

The relaxation of post-war restrictions on building size and materials, and the relative prosperity of the 1960s and 1970s, led to large scale commissions for both residences and holiday homes from wealthy families. These commissions allowed prominent architects to demonstrate the extent of their skills. Several examples of these are included in the VHR, including the Grimwade House (VHR H2209), and Heide II (VHR H1494).

Guilford Bell

Guilford Bell, the architect of Seccull House, was born in Brisbane in 1912 to a wealthy grazier family.^[5] In 1930 he began working for Brisbane architect Lange L. Powell and commenced architectural studies at Brisbane Central Technical College. He registered as an architect in 1936 and travelled to London to work for office of Professor Albert E. Richardson. During the 1930s he also travelled to Syria, an influence on his work that became

pronounced in later years. After serving in the RAAF during World War II, Bell worked for Ansett Australia, designing Australia's first purpose-built tourist resort on Hayman Island. Bell began a private practice in Melbourne in the early 1950s and concentrated on residential work. In this era Bell developed several characteristics that would become hallmarks of his approach to residential design – extreme privacy, anonymous street frontages and highly ordered plans. In the early 1960s, Bell worked in partnership with Neil Clerehan and the two architects were awarded an RVIA Architecture medal for the Simon House (also known as Terangeree) in Mount Eliza.

Through the 1960s and 1970s Bell continued to specialise in designing homes in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. Bell was something of an elusive figure amongst the Melbourne architectural community, and unlike many of his contemporaries did not cultivate a public profile through activities such as publishing or teaching. He was best known as a designer of fine large houses for wealthy clients including the Baillieu, Myer and Fairfax families. His design approach became increasingly distinctive, and he became known for a minimalist and monumental style characterised by axial planning, stark finishes and restrained detailing. Middle Eastern and Classical influences were pronounced in his use of perimeter walls, ritualised entry ways, floor to ceiling wall openings and courtyards. In contrast to the architectural mainstream of the era, Bell's houses were rigidly formal and aesthetically minimal.

In 1969 he designed one of his most well-known buildings – the Fairfax Pavilion in Bowral (NSW). The Pavilion exemplified his combining of modernist principles with Classical and Middle Eastern influences. In 1972 he designed the Seccull House, widely regarded as one of his finest houses. He worked consistently on largely residential projects, including the Willy House in Toorak, throughout the 1970s.

In 1977, Bell employed architect Graham Fisher and in 1983, Fisher was made a partner. The firm Guilford Bell and Graham Fisher Architects continued to design high quality homes in Victoria and interstate throughout the 1980s, the Grant House in Officer being one of the most highly regarded.

Bell practiced architecture in Victoria across four decades. His work was and remains highly regarded and is highlighted in a number of publications and studies of post-war architecture.^[6] He died in 1992 and the architectural practice he founded continues to carry his name.

Seccull House

Elaine and William (Bill) Seccull engaged Guilford Bell to design them a home at 32 North Road, Brighton in 1970. Bill Seccull was a master builder who operated a family-run business involved in the construction of prominent post-war projects including the Kraft Factory (1956) and the Royal Children's Hospital (1960). Bell was recommended to the Secculls by mutual friend and interior designer Keith Miles. Although not yet familiar with Bell's work, on seeing photographs of his other projects the Secculls reportedly gave him complete control of designing their home. The generous site at 32 North Road provided ample room for Bell to fully explore the extent of his skill. Bell later reflected that 'never has my work given me more pleasure. Never has a client been more encouraging and supportive.'^[7] Bill Seccull supervised construction. Bell was immensely satisfied with the finished home, which he considered one of his finest.^[8]

Newspaper articles

Day, N., 'Architect leaves a lasting legacy', *The Age*, 11 January 1992.

Ridge, V., 'Sixty squares inspired by a glass pavilion', *The Age*, 17 April 1993.

McDonnell, T., 'Modern Luxury in Brighton', *Australian Jewish News*, 16 April 1993.

Books and book chapters

Bruhn, C. and Butler, K. (eds), *The Forever House: Time Honoured Australian Homes*, Port Melbourne, VIC, Thames & Hudson, 2014.

Goad, P., *Melbourne Architecture*, Boorowa, NSW, Watermark Press, 2009.

Goad, P., 'Bell, Guilford', in P. Goad and J. Willis (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Port Melbourne, VIC, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 78-79.

Lewi, H., and Goad, P., *Australia Modern: Architecture, Landscape & Design*, Port Melbourne, VIC, Thames & Hudson, 2019.

London, G., Goad, P. and Hamann, C., *150: An Unfinished Experiment in Living, Australian Houses 1950–65*, Crawley, WA, UWA Publishing, 2017.

McCartney, K., *50/60/70: Iconic Australian Houses, Three Decades of Domestic Architecture*, Millers Point, NSW, Murdoch Books Australia, 2007.

van Shaik, L. (ed), *The Life Work of Guilford Bell, Architect 1912-1992*, Melbourne, Bookman Transition Publishing, 1999.

Theses

Goad, P., *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1992.

Heritage Citations, Assessments and Reports

Graeme Butler & Associates, *Cardinia Shire (North) Heritage Study*, 1996.

Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, 2008.

Heritage Alliance, *City of Bayside Inter-War & Post-War Heritage Study*, 2008.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria), *Seccull House Classification Report*.

[1] G. London, P. Goad and C Hamann, *150: An Unfinished Experiment in Living, Australian Houses 1950–65*, Crawley, WA, UWA Publishing, 2017, p1.

[2] P. Goad., *Melbourne Architecture*, Boorowa, NSW, Watermark Press, 2009, p199.

[3] P. Goad, *The Modern House in Melbourne 1945-1975*, PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1992, chp6. p148.

[4] K. McCartney, *50/60/70: Iconic Australian Houses, Three Decades of Domestic Architecture*, Millers Point, NSW, Murdoch Books Australia, 2007. p13.

[5] Drawn from P. Goad, 'Bell, Guilford', *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, eds P. Goad and J. Willis, pp. 77-78.

[6] See, for example, Ibid; Heritage Alliance, *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, 2008; P. Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*, Boorowa, NSW, Watermark Press, 2009; H. Lewi, and P. Goad, *Australia Modern: Architecture, Landscape & Design*, Port Melbourne, VIC, Thames & Hudson, 2019.

[7] L. van Shaik (ed), *The Life Work of Guilford Bell, Architect 1912-1992*, Melbourne, Bookman Transition

Publishing, 1999. p181.

[8] Heritage Alliance, *City of Bayside Inter-War & Post-War Heritage Study*, 2008. p90.

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 2017**, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including a place in the Heritage Register:

Number: H2406

Category: Registered Place

Place: Seccull House

Location: 32 North Road, Brighton

Municipality: Bayside City Council

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2406 encompassing all of Lot 1 on Lodged Plan 33094.

Dated 25 November 2021 STEVEN AVERY Executive Director

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>