



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 4.1.2 Making suburbs
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HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 107 Settlements
- 605 Famous and infamous people

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a very fine example of the Inter-War Mediterranean style applied to a simple two-storey block of four flats. It features some fine detailing in its balconies, front entrance and internal face brickwork detailing. The interiors are generously planned and the level of detailing high, with generous amounts of closet space well distributed through each place. (Criterion 1.1)

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a creative and early example of the work produced by the partnership between Herbert Parry and Marshall Clifton. (Criterion 1.2)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is one of the earliest, architect designed, small blocks of flats built to accommodate the upper and middle classes in Perth and West Perth, in a period in which the attractions and advantages of such accommodation were being actively promoted. (Criterion 2.1)

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street was built in a period of expanded building activity as the State's economy emerged from the Great Depression. (Criterion 2.2)

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street was designed by Marshal Clifton, prominent Western Australian architect and artist (1903-1975), and built as an investment for music teacher, Alexander Joseph Leckie, who played a most influential and prominent role in the development of music in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.3)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street exhibits the creative design excellence of Architect Marshall Clifton during the period of his partnership with Parry, and illustrates all of his major design preoccupations. The place was noted at the period of its construction for its modernity, and up-to-date conveniences. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street are valued by members of the architectural community as an early and significant example of Marshall Clifton's work. The place is also valued by the wider community, as a significant example of his work and for its aesthetic value, as evidenced by its inclusion in the City of Perth's Municipal Heritage Inventory. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a distinctive and early demonstration of self-contained flat style accommodation for members of the upper and middle classes in Perth and West Perth in the early to late 1930s, of which few examples remain. (Criterion 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a fine example of the Inter-War Mediterranean style applied to a simple two-storey block of four flats. It is representative of the creative solutions that were being applied to small blocks of flats in Perth in the Inter-War period. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is generally in good condition, with the exception of some cracking associated with the concrete balconies. The timber staircases are neglected and in need of some repair. Maintenance generally appears to have been minimal but adequate. The interiors are generally in good condition, with the exception of areas of cracking and one or two original ceilings that are sagging. Overall the place is in fair to good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street remains in use for their intended purpose. Ongoing use for this purpose would sustain its values. The place retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street has undergone minor changes including the filling in of the south verandahs, and minor repairs. Otherwise the place retains a high level of original fabric and detailing. *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* retains a high degree of authenticity.

The interiors retain much of their original fabric. Most of the ceilings in the ground floor level have been removed and replaced with gyprock with coved

cornices. Most kitchens have been either partly or totally refitted, except for number 3, which retains all of its original fabric. The interiors retain a moderate to high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Robin Chinnery, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a two-storey block of four flats in load bearing brick construction with a concrete tiled roof, designed in the Inter-War Mediterranean style, completed in 1933 for Alexander Joseph Leckie to designs by Marshal Clifton of Parry and Marshall Clifton.

Following the foundation of Perth on 12 August 1829, the townsite of Perth was laid out between Mount Eliza and Heirisson Island, facing the Swan River on the south, and with a chain of swamps and lagoons to the north. From the 1840s, the area of land to the north of the original townsite began to be taken up for farmlets and market gardens when drainage of the wetlands made the fertile swamp land available for agriculture. By the 1870s, the city centre of Perth was consolidated on the grid laid out of Roe's survey, and there were about 800 houses accommodating about 4,600 people.¹ In the 1880s, there was expansion northwards, and further development took place after the construction of Perth Railway Station in 1880.

The Western Australian Gold Boom resulted in a building boom in Perth from the mid-1890s. There was considerable expansion of residential and commercial building in the areas to the north, east, and west of the city, and many of the large Perth Town Lots were sub-divided during the period. Subsequently, the area of West Perth to the south of the railway line, between Hay Street and Kings Park Road, was largely developed as residences for the upper and upper middle class, professionals and civil servants, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thomas Street, West Perth, was named after James Henry English Thomas M.L.C., Director of Public Works (1876-84), Government Engineer and Commissioner of Railways.²

On 10 August 1904, the transfer of Lot 102 on deposited plan 2168, 26 and three tenths perches in area, the future site of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*, portion of Perth Town Lot H 128, to Walter Lay, builder, was registered.³

On 24 July 1905, the transfer of Lot 101, 25 and two tenths perches in area, portion of Perth Town Lot H128, to Lydia Ann Waterhouse was registered.⁴ On 12 August 1905, the transfer to her of Lot 102 was registered.⁵ On 5 February 1908, she died intestate, and Letters of Administration of her Estate were granted to the West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company

¹ Campbell, Robin McK. in Pitt Morrison, Margaret, and White, John (Eds.) *Western Towns and Buildings* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979) Morrison, Margaret and White, John (Eds.) *Western Towns and Buildings* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1979) p. 104.

² *Sunday Times* 4 August 1929, p. 24; and Erickson, Rica (Ed.) *The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians pre-1829-1888* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1988) p. 3039.

³ Certificate of Title Vol. 312 Fol. 145. Note: The lot was mortgaged in November, to secure £500, probably to finance building of the residence i.e. the present 76 Thomas Street.

⁴ Certificate of Title Vol. 343 Fol. 98.

⁵ Certificate of Title Vol. 312 Fol. 145.

Limited on 9 October. On 14 January 1909, both lots were transferred by endorsement to Riva Silbert, married woman, of Perth.⁶ In 1910, she was recorded as the owner of a house and vacant ground, with a capital value of £1,275 and an annual value of £51 at Lots 101/102, no. 24 Thomas Street, where she resided with her husband, Abraham, of Silbert & Sharp.⁷

On 18 July 1928, the transfers of Lots 101 and 102 to Alexander Joseph Leckie, music teacher, of 76 Thomas Street, West Perth were registered.⁸

Alexander Joseph Leckie (b. Newtown, Geelong, Victoria, 1881, d. Perth, 1966) had studied in London at the Royal College of Music (1904-07), then became organist at St. John's Camberwell, Melbourne (1907). From 1908 to 1917, he was organist and choirmaster at St. George's Cathedral, Perth, succeeding G. A. d'Arcy-Irvine, whose extensive piano-teaching practice he purchased. Leckie was foundation president of the Western Australian Music Teachers' Association (1910), and founded the Metropolitan Orchestral Society, which he conducted (1913-23) along with the Metropolitan Liedertafel (later Gleemen) (1912-32). He played an active role in the formation, direction, and promotion of a number of choirs, including the University Choral Society as founder and conductor (1931-45). His long term association with the University of Western Australia included serving as president of the University Music Society, examiner of the Australian Music Examinations Board, lecturing in extension courses in the 1930s, and, when the music department was formed, lecturing in music (1954). He served also as the honorary representative of the Royal College of Music in Perth. Leckie recognised early the potential of radio, and was musical director of 6WF in the 1920s. Over more than 50 years, he made a major contribution to music in Western Australia, for which he was awarded an M. B. E. in 1963.⁹

From 1928, through into the mid-1930s, the Leckie family resided at 76 Thomas Street.¹⁰ There was a tennis court on the northern lot. Circa 1932-33, they decided that they 'might as well do something' with that land, and began discussing the possibility of building flats on the site.¹¹ Architect Marshall Clifton, of Parry and Marshall Clifton, was commissioned for the project. Members of the Leckie family enjoyed planning the place with the architect, and appreciated the careful planning that ensured the final design 'got everything right', so that the flats were an attractive design, oriented to provide ample natural light and ventilation, and included the provision of a more substantial number of built-in cupboards than was common in the period.¹²

In August 1933, Architect Marshall Clifton designed the block of flats to be built at Lots 101/102, Thomas Street. Clifton (1903-75) had completed his Articles of Cadetship with the Public Works Department in Western Australia in October 1926. Elected an Associate of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia, he received the Institute's bronze medal for 1926.

⁶ *ibid*; and Certificate of Title Vol. 343 Fol. 98.

⁷ City of Perth Rate Books, South Ward, 1910, p. 137; and *Wise's Post Office Directory*, 1910, p. 338.

⁸ Certificates of Title Vol. Vol. 312 Fol. 145 and 343 Fol. 98.

⁹ Erickson, Rica (Ed.) *The Dictionary of Western Australians: Vol. 5, The Golden Years 1889-1914* (University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1986) p. 519; *Australian Dictionary of Biography* 1891-1931, pp. 42-43; and Stephanie Coleman, conversation with Robin Chinnery, 24 October 2002.

¹⁰ *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1929-34.

¹¹ Barbara Walton (nee Leckie) telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, 24 October 2002.

¹² *ibid*.

Appointed Assistant Architect, he worked for the P.W.D. to October 1929. This was followed by a period working with Architect George Herbert Parry, prior to his departure for England to widen his knowledge and experience in mid-1930. Clifton obtained a position with E. Vincent Harris, one of London's leading architects, and studied at the School of Architecture at the Royal Academy. After traveling in Europe, in 1932, he returned to Western Australia, where he joined Parry, with whom he had continued to correspond whilst overseas, in a partnership that continued through to 1937, when Clifton established his own practice. The partnership provided the opportunity for Clifton to work in a well established practice, whose clients included the Anglican Church and 'important clients in the hotel industry'.¹³

The design of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*, was Clifton's first major commission during his partnership with Parry. Duncan Richards and Barbara Chapman consider that the project

combines in an interesting and convincing manner all of Clifton's major design preoccupations; the formal symmetrical order inherent in the classical system, the informal "organic" order of the vernacular, and the use of innovative and economical constructional detailing.¹⁴

These flats were the first of a number designed by Clifton individually during his partnership with Parry. The scheme is quite typical, and the place is representative of Clifton's work in this period. The place is notable for the small innovative details that he incorporated, such as the use of corrugated asbestos edging on the hoods and the use of textured and rough brickwork. The architectural practice was classically oriented, and the partnership with Parry was influential. The design of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* 'suggests where Clifton was going and where his heart was.'¹⁵ The place is of high significance in the body of his work. Clifton also designed some further flats after he went into individual practice in the pre World War Two period. However, in the post World War Two period, most of his work was of a different type. Few examples of Clifton's flat designs survive in 2002, and, among the survivors, few have retained the high degree of authenticity and integrity of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*. Wittenoom, at 65 Mount Street, was probably the finest example of Clifton's flat design, and represented the end of an era. However, its authenticity has been lost due to later alterations.¹⁶

Tenders were duly called, and the lowest tender was accepted, at £3,993, from builder T. Snooks & Son in late August. It was reported that the block of flats was to contain 'four modern self-contained flats with all up-to-date conveniences including well equipped bathrooms, concealed lighting, and many labour saving devices.'¹⁷

In September, Clifton also designed a block of three four room flats, with a floor area of 3,702 square feet, at 9 Mayfair Street, West Perth, for Miss Cohen and Miss Walder.¹⁸ These flats are no longer extant.¹⁹

13 Chapman, Barbara and Richards, Duncan *Marshall Clifton Architect and Artist* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1989) pp. 21-23, and pp. 47-49.

14 *ibid.*, p. 49.

15 Duncan Richards, telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, 4 November 2002.

16 *ibid.*

17 *Building and Construction* 25 August 1933, p. 8.

18 Chapman, Barbara and Richards, Duncan *op. cit.*, p. 134; and Building Licence Application no. 698/33 in Record of Building Licences, City of Perth, November 1932-April 1937, p. 33, 28 October 1933. Note: The latter recorded Parry as the architect of the flats at 9 Mayfair Street.

Among the well known buildings designed during Clifton's partnership with Parry are the Captain Stirling Hotel (1935), the Inglewood Hotel (1935) and the Big Bell Hotel (1936).²⁰ Clifton became one of the most prominent architects in the State, 'best known as a designer of houses', and recognised for his considerable contribution the development of a regional architecture 'appropriate to its social surroundings and climatic conditions.'²¹

On 27 September 1933, the building licence was granted to W. S. Leckie, for the two storey block of four four-room flats at Lots 101/102 Thomas Street, with a floor area of 5696 square feet, to be constructed in brick, at a cost of £3,704.²² It is not known whether the difference in cost reflected a modification in the design.

In late 1933, the property was mortgaged to The Commercial Bank of Australia Limited on 7 November, which was discharged on 18 December, when it was mortgaged to two spinsters of View Street, Cottesloe.²³ The mortgage was probably to finance the building of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*.

Barbara Walton (nee Leckie) is uncertain of the date of completion of the place.²⁴ As the building licence was granted in late September, completion was probably late 1933 or early 1934. The two storey brick and tile roofed building comprised four flats, with timber floors, and the exterior featured a pattern of over-burnt or clinker bricks set proud of the main wall face.²⁵ All those who knew the place from the mid-1930s recollect the exterior walls as painted white or cream, with the timber and iron work in contrasting green.²⁶

The place was built in a period in which flats were promoted as an attractive alternative mode of accommodation for the upper and middle classes. The western end of the City of Perth, including Mount and Malcolm streets, and West Perth, were popular for such developments, and also for the conversion of large older residences into luxury flats, as they were not only conveniently located to the city, but well established as socially desirable areas for the upper and middle classes. (See also Comparative Information.)

On 6 April 1935, the existing Certificates of Title were canceled and a new certificate was issued, for portion of Perth Town Lot H128, one rood and seven tenths perches in area, the subject of diagram 9810. This Certificate of Title was canceled the same day, and a new Certificate issued for the balance (Lot 2), Lot 1 being transferred to Madeline Meagher, widow, of 7 Clarence Street, South Perth.²⁷ In 1935, the Rate Books place recorded the place with a capital value of £2842 and an annual value of £260.²⁸

¹⁹ Philip Griffiths, site visit, 23 October 2002.

²⁰ Chapman, Barbara and Richards, Duncan op. cit., p. 51.

²¹ *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 13 (1940-80), p. 444.

²² Building Licence Application no. 654/33 in Record of Building Licences, City of Perth, November 1932-April 1937, p. 30, 27 September 1933.

²³ Certificates of Title Vol. 312 Fol. 145 and Vol. 343 Fol. 98.

²⁴ Barbara Walton op. cit.

²⁵ Certificate of Local Authority Strata Plan No. 6072, City of Perth, 2 May 1978; and site visit, Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 23 October 2002. City of Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory, 72-74 Thomas Street, West Perth, p. 2.

²⁶ Barbara Walton op. cit.; and Nancy Grey (nee Meagher) and Patricia Gray Nee (Meagher) telephone conversations with Robin Chinnery, 24 October 2002.

²⁷ Certificates of Title Vol. 312 Fol. 145, Vol. 343 Fol. 98, Vol. 1042 Fol. 98 and Vol. 1042 Fol. 99. Note: The Leckie family moved to another residence nearby in c. 1935-36. (Barbara Walton (nee Leckie) telephone conversation with Robin Chinnery, 24 October 2002) However, Leckie

Mrs. Meagher purchased the place primarily as an investment property. Throughout most of the 41 years that the Meagher family owned the place, most of the flats continued to be let to tenants, a number of whom lived there for extended periods, including Wilfred Berry (also recorded as Beery), Ross Andrew, and Rex Norrie.²⁹

In 1937, when flat 4 was vacated by Robert Leifer, Mrs. Burdett took up residence there.³⁰ She 'loved the place', and subsequently had a two storey block of four flats built to similar design at 23 Rheola Street, West Perth.³¹ This building is extant in 2002.³²

On 7 January 1942, Madeline Meagher died, and Probate of her Will was granted to the Executors, Frank Wilfred Meagher and the West Australian Trustee Executor and Agency Company Limited on 13 February. On 11 August, the place was transferred to Patricia Madeline Meagher, shop assistant, and Nancy Meagher, nurse, both of 34 Ventnor Avenue, West Perth, as tenants in common.³³ Subsequently, both women took up residence at the place for a period in the 1940s, occupying the front flats. On their respective marriages, to Lindsay Poplin Gray (1944) and to Edward Eltan Grey (1946), the Certificate of Title was amended accordingly.³⁴ In 1947, whilst they and their respective husbands were living at the place, Nancy and Patricia both had a baby. Subsequently, Nancy had wire put around the balcony at flat 3 to safeguard her young daughter. At this period, all of the flats' side verandahs remained open, that on the south-east corner serving as a laundry for all the residents. The garden was well established and 'pretty', enhancing the entrance to the building.³⁵

In 1949, Dr. and Lindsay Gray were resident at *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*, with the other three flats tenanted by H. O. Morrison, Ross Andrew and Rex Norrie.³⁶ Mrs. Morrison, Alexander Leckie's daughter, occupied the rear flat downstairs, and Rex Norrie the flat at the rear upstairs.³⁷ In 1949-50, the Gray family moved to Melbourne, and then returned to live at the place c. 1951, for about a year.³⁸

In September 1955, a Metropolitan Sewerage plan shows the place as a two storey brick building, with a verandah at the north-west corner, an entry porch on the north side, two sets of stairs at the front and rear on the southern side of the building, a laundry at the south-east corner, and a driveway from Thomas Street leading to brick garages on the northern side towards the rear of the building. There is an asbestos building abutting the

retained ownership of 76 Thomas Street for some years, leasing it to tenants. (City of Perth Rate Books, South Ward, 1935-37.)

28 City of Perth Rate Books, South Ward, 1935.

29 Nancy Grey and Patricia Gray op. cit.; City of Perth Rate Books South Ward, 1937, p. 87; and *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1937-49.

30 City of Perth Rate Books *ibid*.

31 Nancy Grey op. cit.

32 Site visit Robin Chinnery, 25 October 2002.

33 Certificate of Title Vol. 1042 Fol. 99.

34 Certificate of Title Vol. 1042 Fol. 99.

35 Mrs. Nancy Grey op. cit.

36 *Wise's Post Office Directory* 1949, p. 88; and Electoral Roll, Legislative Assembly, 15 March 1949.

37 Nancy Grey op. cit.

38 Nancy Grey and Patricia Gray op. cit.

rearmost stairs on the south side, which is no longer extant in 2002. There is a bitumen surfaced right of way at the rear of the lot.³⁹

In the mid 1970s, the owners were made aware of proposals for the widening of Thomas Street, which would have a considerable impact on the place. They made various inquiries to the relevant authorities, but were unable to obtain specific information as to when the proposal might be implemented. Reluctantly, the decision was made to sell the place, but in such a climate of uncertainty there was only one buyer, and the price offered was low, at \$70,000.⁴⁰

On 27 August 1976, the transfer of the place to 74 Thomas St. Pty. Ltd. was registered.⁴¹ On 26 May 1978, the existing Certificate of Title was canceled to Strata Plan 6072. The Strata Plan shows the four flats as residential units 1 (114 square metres in area), 2 (111 square metres in area), 3 (114 square metres in area) and 4 (116 square metres in area).⁴²

On 1 May 1981, the place was transferred to the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, as part of the Authority's land acquisition for the proposed road widening.⁴³ Since 1981, the individual flats have been leased to tenants. Basic repairs and maintenance have been carried out as required. Physical evidence and oral evidence from the present tenants indicates that the only major work has been re-wiring of flats 1,2 and 3 c. 1999, when the original light fittings were removed, and some ceilings of the downstairs flats replaced.⁴⁴

On 13 March 2001, *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* was included in the City of Perth's Municipal Heritage Inventory adopted by the Council. It was considered that the place was of aesthetic significance 'as an example of a residential building dating from the mid twentieth century', and afforded Level 1 Protection.⁴⁵

In October 2002, former owners, Patricia Gray and Nancy Grey in individual recollections voiced their appreciation of Marshall Clifton's attractive design of the building, the qualities of spaciousness and light in the flats, affection for the place, and their concern for the future of the place since the proposal for road widening of Thomas Street. In late 2002, the place continues to be occupied by tenants, who share their sentiments.⁴⁶

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is a two storey block of four flats in load bearing brick construction with a concrete tiled roof, designed in the Inter-War Mediterranean style⁴⁷, completed in 1933/4 for Alexander Joseph Leckie to designs by Marshal Clifton of Parry and Marshall Clifton.

³⁹ Metropolitan Sewerage City of Perth, SROWA Cons. 4156 Item 2, 2 September 1955.

⁴⁰ Nancy Grey and Patricia Gray op. cit.

⁴¹ Certificates of Title Vol. 1042 Fol. 99 and Vol. 1443 Fol. 271.

⁴² Certificates of Title Vol. 1443 Fol. 271 and Vol. 1504 Fols. 140, 141, 142 and 143; and Strata Plan No. 6072, May 1978.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Site visit by Robin Chinnery and Philip Griffiths, 23 October 2002.

⁴⁵ City of Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory, 72-74 Thomas Street, West Perth, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Nancy Grey and Patricia Gray op. cit.; and conversations with tenants of flats, 23 October 2002.

⁴⁷ Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989) pp. 174-177

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street is located on the east side of Thomas Street close to the junction of Richardson Avenue. Thomas Street is a very busy road with two traffic lanes in each direction, narrow grass verges and concrete paving slab footpaths. There are no street trees.

The site of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* is oriented on an east-west axis and the site is laid out with the flats running along the south side of the lot, close to its boundary, leaving a small front garden, narrow passage to the south, and a narrow side garden to the north. Garage space for two cars is located to the rear of the building on its north side, with access to a right of way. The side boundary fences are constructed in corrugated fibrous cement sheeting, while the front fence is a low brick wall with four built in letterboxes. The fence and letterboxes are clearly part of the original design and fabric. Two brick steps lead up into the front garden. The front garden is grassed and a slab path leads to the entrance along the north side of the building and then leads on to the rear garages. Plantings in the front garden comprise Bottlebrush and Ivy, while those along the side boundary include Tacoma and Monstera.

The main elevation components of *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* comprise painted brick wall planes, curved corner balconies, tiled sunhoods, finely detailed steel balustrades, and a classically derived main entrance on the side of the building with a balconette over it, together with an arched opening over the entry, with a pair of casement windows and fanlight. Steeply pitched concrete tiled hipped roofs with two face brick chimneys make up the roofscape. Overall the place has a Mediterranean visual expression, but also employs minor elements associated with the Inter-War Functionalist style, such as in the concrete balconies.

The external walls are constructed in face brickwork with a pattern of over-burnt or clinker bricks set proud of the main wall face. Curved concrete balconies and sunhoods are finished in stucco. Other than the plinth courses and chimneys, all of the masonry is painted.

The front elevation is quite austere, with an 'L' shaped plan containing the concrete balcony and its solid brick balustrade at the ground floor level and finely proportioned wrought iron balustrade at first floor level. The balcony has a flat roof, with a vertical corrugated sheeting edge. Half glazed doors lead off the balconies at each level. Off to the south of the balcony, there is a pair of steel framed casement windows and fixed lights at ground floor level, with a cantilevered concrete sunhood over them. The sunhood is visually supported on wrought iron brackets. At first floor level there is a set of French doors constructed in steel sections, with a concrete balconette supported on corbelled brackets. The balconette has a finely detailed wrought iron balustrade. The roof extends beyond the eaves to form a sunhood over the French doors. The gutters, metal window frames, and metal balustrades are painted a deep green that contrasts strongly with the white painted brickwork. The colour scheme accords with the earliest recollections of the place.

The hipped roof is covered with concrete tiles and extends over the walls to form deep eaves. Where windows occur, the roof is extended still further to form sunhoods. There are quad profile gutters at the eaves and the soffits are boxed out with painted corrugated galvanized iron applied to the soffits.

The north side elevation is the principle frontage and is organized around the entry, which comprises a green concrete step, a pair of plain Tuscan columns and a deep entablature, topped by a Juliet balconette and a pair of steel framed casement windows with a fanlight over the casement. The window

has a projecting sill and a recessed brick margin to the perimeter of the opening, with a decorative keystone extending up from the arch towards the eaves. Main room windows flanking the entrance are the same as the window format as those used in the front of the building, but have built in flower boxes under the ground floor level sets. Service rooms such as bathrooms have small steel framed windows, some modified with louvres to achieve permanent ventilation.

The rear elevation is simply expressed with a two car garage under a mono pitched corrugated iron roof and the bottom flight of a dog leg timber framed escape stair from the rear apartment.

Similarly the south elevation is treated very simply and is a secondary elevation. It comprises a long brick wall with two verandah sections, both of which are infilled with asbestos cement panelling and sliding windows. An open tread timber construction staircase with a chainlink mesh infilled balustrade provides a fire escape from first floor level at the eastern end of the building. A similar staircase appears on drawings at the western end of the building, but has been removed.

The flats are planned around a central entry and lobby, with two flats on the ground floor to the east and west of the lobby and a further two flat over them with access from a landing. The porch has a herringbone pattern brick paved floor, leading to the front door which is made up with three panels and a 6 pane obscured glass light at high level.

The lobby has a green concrete floor, with matching skirtings, and the walls are laid in stretcher bond brickwork, with a very fine Roman brick course at every fifth course. The doors have casements of Roman bricks laid in stack bond and as a header course over the lintels. Doors are simple painted timber five panel design. A green scissors pattern concrete stair leads up to first floor level, and it has a very finely detailed wrought iron balustrade, with flat bar bottom and handrails, and square bar balusters and decorative swirling balustrade infill panels. The walls to the lobby at first floor level mirror those at ground floor level, however, the upper walls are painted above a low dado of face brickwork. The soffit is simply dealt with and is constructed with plasterboard and cover battens. Front doors at the first floor level have been fitted with flywire screen doors.

The flats differ in a small number of ways, but each is planned along the same lines. They comprise a large living dining room, leading off the stair lobby, a kitchen attached to the dining area, a former verandah off the dining room and corridor, with a built in closet, a bathroom, and two bedrooms on the outside or east and west walls. The rooms, particularly the lounge and dining room area, are well planned, with a very good distribution of closet space, more akin to a house than a flat. The ceilings are high and the living/dining rooms are generous with tall ceilings, timber floors, some of which are carpeted, and profiled timber skirtings. The walls are plastered, with battens at intervals to create the illusion of paneling. A plate rail is set just below door head height and a picture rail extends around the perimeter of the room. The ceiling is plain plasterboard, but it has a deep boxed out cornice with a fluted face. Steel framed fixed light and casement windows on both sides of the room provide ample light. There are pass through cupboards to kitchens, though some have been removed, leaving the doors between the two spaces. Adjacent to the entries, there are hall closets and other built in closets. Internal doors are generally five panel types, though some, such as flat 2 have been replaced with flush doors. Doors to former verandahs and balconies match the part glazed front entrance door previously noted. Other distinctive

features include face brick fireplaces and broad chimney breasts, and wood boxes set under windows in the form of chests. In some of these rooms, there is evidence of damp associated with showers and baths.

The kitchens are generous for their period also. The only remaining original kitchen (flat 3) has ply faced paneled cupboards and food safes, with a sheet metal exhaust system. However, other kitchens have been re-fitted. The remaining original fabric comprises granolithic floors, mostly covered, glass faced cement rendered walls with an incised dado, and plaster and cover batten ceilings. Those in the ground floor have been replaced. There is an original built in cupboard in each kitchen.

A short corridor extends from each living room to service the two bedrooms, bathroom, and verandah. The corridors have timber floors, some of which are carpeted. Each corridor has built in cupboards adjacent to the bathroom. Again some ground floor ceilings have been replaced, while others retain their plasterboard and cover batten ceilings.

Bathrooms are long rectangular spaces, with granolithic floors, some of which are covered with vinyl, glass faced cement rendered walls with an incised dado, and plaster and cover batten ceilings, with some replaced as previously noted. The bathroom service walls are divided into three spaces with wing walls, and the compartments contain showers, baths, and water closets. The basins are set on the opposing walls. Original baths and basins are cast iron construction coated with vitreous enamel. On the outside wall there is a pair of casement windows with a narrow mirror faced bathroom cabinet set between them. Ceilings are the same as in other locations. There is evidence of damp in the bathrooms associated with showers and baths.

Front bedrooms differ in detail in terms of size and whether or not they have access to balconies. There are two different size bedrooms for each flat. All rooms have timber floors, but most have been carpeted. All front bedroom have built in wardrobes. Ceilings are generally authentic plasterboard and batten ceilings at first floor level and gyprock and cove cornice pattern on the ground floor. All bedrooms have picture rails.

The remaining room is the former verandah. All of these have now been enclosed to form studies or in one case a general work room and laundry. There is a step down onto the verandah and each verandah has a granolithic floor, painted face brick walls, flat fibrous cement and cover batten ceilings, and a framed outside wall. The infilling appears to have been an ad hoc arrangement and all of the infill systems differ. The infilling in flat 3 appears to be quite early and is detailed to suit the period, while others make use of materials that were in common use from the mid 1960s, such as aluminium framed sliding windows.

The building would appear to have received reasonable maintenance, though there remain some problems associated with damp penetration of walls from baths and showers, together with cracking over some doors and windows, fractures in ceiling and cornice junctions, and instances of sagging in first floor ceilings. Most of these problems can be addressed with minor interventions. The ceilings for example could simply be propped, re-grouted from the roof space and redecorated. All remaining authentic fabric internally is capable of conservation. Defects in the balconies appear to be associated with deterioration of steel reinforcement in the concrete and should be capable of remediation.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

The comparative information in this section is based on work compiled by Rachel Plug B.A. (Hons. History) UWA in the assessment for *Berkely Flats* August 1999. The work draws on Dr. Robyn Taylor's substantive unpublished PhD thesis, Taylor, R.D. 'An investigation into the nature of modernism and modernity during the 1930s in Perth, Western Australia, through the study of specific buildings and related art and design forms' (1993).

The rise in popularity of flats in Perth.

Flats 72-74 Thomas Street were built in 1933, around the middle of the Inter-War period during which flats first became a popular form of accommodation in Western Australia.

Flats were widely built in most Western countries during the inter-war period, as a means of housing as many people as cheaply as possible, and as close to places of employment as possible. In the United States and continental Europe, flats had already been a common and acceptable form of city accommodation for some time. The British ideal, however, was to own a home of one's own. Historically, only the poor had lived in shared accommodation. Flats were considered a necessary but undesirable solution to the housing shortage. Australia, culturally if no longer politically a British colony, had a similar opinion of flats.⁴⁸

Early flats in Perth and its environs seem to have fallen into two distinct categories. On the one hand, there were the low-cost, low-quality boarding houses and tenements, which were deservedly regarded as slums. A form of 'flat' which became quite common in the Depression was the partitioned-off verandah, perhaps fitted with a gas ring, and rented out to supplement the family's income.⁴⁹ There were also, at the other extreme, luxury serviced flats, mainly found in the central city. For wealthy people, faced with an increasing shortage of servants due to the fact that women were seeking employment in areas other than domestic service, luxury flats provided a high-quality, low-maintenance alternative to the traditional large house.⁵⁰

By the 1930s it became evident that there was a third sector of the population for whom flats were an appropriate form of accommodation. These were middle-class people, usually on somewhat restricted incomes, for whom it was convenient to dwell in the city. They included single professionals and young married or working couples. Flats provided a higher standard of living and greater degree of independence for these people than would otherwise have been possible. These advantages can be seen particularly clearly in the minimum or bachelor flat, a very small self-contained flat designed for the single city-dwelling man or woman on a small income.⁵¹ It was for this middle-class group of city dwellers that most of Perth's Inter-War flats, including the *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*, were built.

In spite of the fact that the flat answered many of Perth's housing needs, there was still wide-spread opposition to the trend towards flat-dwelling. It

⁴⁸ Taylor, R.D. (1993), 'An investigation onto the nature of modernism and modernity during the 1930s in Perth, Western Australia, through the study of specific buildings and related art and design forms', unpublished thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Western Australia, Vol. 1, Chap. 6, 'The modern flat in Perth', pp. 327-330.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 351.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 354-355.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

was thought to cause falling birth rates and a general deterioration of family values, as well as threatening the building industry.⁵² This was hardly the case, as at least one contemporary writer pointed out: generally, people were not choosing to live in flats instead of houses, but rather, flats were providing a form of housing for those who could otherwise not afford it.⁵³ Another concern was the perceived potential of flats to become slums. This was largely because many people saw shared housing as being synonymous with poverty and vice.

Some of the ways in which flat builders tried to deal with these negative attitudes included the careful marketing and location of the blocks in order to suggest a certain type of lifestyle incompatible with slum conditions. An example of this is the manner in which the prospectus for the Riviera Flats on Mill Street, by Harold Krantz, was illustrated. Motifs included elegantly dressed tenants entering the block, expensive cars on the street outside, and couples playing tennis on the roof-top garden.⁵⁴ All of this combined to give an air of luxury, although the rental of the flats, while high enough to keep out the poor, was not beyond the means of middle-class city workers. It seems to have been common practice to charge reasonably high rents, partly in order to prevent vagrants and the unemployed from becoming tenants, and partly so that the owner would receive good returns and be able to afford to maintain the building.⁵⁵ Both of these aspects discouraged the development of slums.

Another measure sometimes employed to maintain the prestige of a block of flats was the live-in caretaker. This helped to prevent undesirable behaviour on the part of the tenants and allowed repairs and maintenance to be carried out efficiently. Modern design added to the desirability of a building, and, due to its use of simple fittings and details, reduced the need for maintenance, making it less easy for buildings to become shabby. Flats tended to be located in fairly prestigious areas where it was anticipated that there would be an ongoing market for housing, such as St. George's and Adelaide Terraces, Mount Street, Colin Street, or Stirling Highway. This meant that there was little chance of having many tenancies fall vacant resulting in decreasing returns, lack of maintenance and loss of prestige, which, as Harold Krantz pointed out at the time, were the most powerful factors in the creation of slum areas.⁵⁶ Careful selection of names also strengthened the appeal of the lifestyle flats offered. 'Varsity', 'Winthrop' and 'Oxford', located near the newly built University of Western Australia, had strong academic overtones, while names such as 'Riviera' conjured up the image of beach-side life in fashionable places such as California or the south of France.⁵⁷

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 327-328, 359-360.

⁵³ 'Flats and more Flats' in *Turner's*, October 1937, pp. 46-47, cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴ Graphics by John Oldham for the Prospectus of Riviera Investments Ltd, 1939; rendering of Riviera Flats by John Oldham; figures 6.48 and 6.50 respectively in Taylor, R.D. (1993), *op. cit.*, Vol. 2.

⁵⁵ Krantz, H., Letter in Perth City Council Building file, 'Building Flats etc. File No. 1', cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1., p. 404.

⁵⁶ Krantz, H., 'Flats. Socialological and economic aspect [sic]' in *The Architect*, December 1941, pp. 19-23.

⁵⁷ Taylor, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 373, 402.

Other buildings by Parry and Clifton.

According to the short index of buildings and projects by Marshal Clifton, a further block of flats was designed for 9 Mayfair Street, West Perth.⁵⁸ Drawings for this building have not been viewed. There is no building that would fit this description at the stated address.

A further block of flats not included in the index was built named Suffolk at 23 Rheola Street, West Perth, not far from *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street*. The site orientation is north-south rather than east-west so that the program differs. However, the architectural language is similar, minus the use of clinker or over burnt bricks. Here there is a subtle shift towards the Functionalist style, with corner windows, a plain semi circular entry and a reduction in the amount of ornament. The planning has been altered to combine the escapes from both upper level units at the centre of the building, in contrast with *Flats 72-74 Thomas Street* where the escape stairs are at either end of the building.

Wittenoom, at 65 Mount Street, was built in 1940 and was departure from the small block model. It was a four storey block of four flats per floor, but by the time this building was designed, Clifton had moved on to a style influenced by Hollywood revival of Spanish mission attributes, which evolved into the Inter-War Spanish Mission style.⁵⁹

Clifton's work was providing residential flats for a more affluent demographic than Krantz and Sheldon, who tended to produce work for smaller units of accommodation for a city worker demographic.

The Heritage Council's database lists seven places as flats in the Inter-War Mediterranean style, none of which is entered into the State Register of Heritage Places. P4311 Wittenoom Apartments, P13040 Flats/ Apartments, 16 Bellevue Terrace, West Perth, and P15981 Windsor Court, 1120 Hay Street, West Perth, are part of the current assessment program.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

To date, the original plans of the place have not been located. The Marshall Clifton collection held at Curtin University may have a copy; however, the Head of the Department, who cares for it, is on leave to February 2003.

⁵⁸ Chapman, Barbara and Richards, Duncan, *Marshall Clifton, Architect and Artist*, Fremantle Arts centre Press, Fremantle 1989. p. 134.

⁵⁹ Apperly, *ibid* pp176-179