

MEMORIES OF MODERNISM: THE ROLE OF ORAL HISTORY IN THE ASSESSMENT OF POST-WAR HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

When assessing the heritage significance of places built after the Second World War, the biggest difficulty is overcoming the widely-held perception that these places are simply too recent to be of any value. Unlike a Victorian mansion, an Edwardian villa or an inter-war bungalow, places associated with the recent past, so often untested by scholarly attention and comparative analysis, invariably provoke public (or even professional) apathy. But while the very freshness of these places can be the greatest hurdle to their objective assessment, it is simultaneously their greatest strength. For, unlike a Victorian mansion, Edwardian villa or inter-war bungalow, assessment of post-war places offers the curious researcher the unique opportunity to discuss the creation of the building with those that were directly involved with it.

The present writer first encountered the research potential of oral history while still a student, working as a research assistant on a project to catalogue the complete works of Walter and Marion Griffin. In an idle moment, he was moved to track down and interview some of the remaining eyewitnesses, from the few surviving clients still living in the mid-1990s, through to the last living member of the Griffins' architectural staff. To the surprise of all concerned, conversations with the latter revealed crucial and hitherto unknown information about the Griffins, their practice and their projects (interview with Mr J Mason, 18 January 1995).

Over more than ten subsequent years as a full-time heritage consultant, the present writer has honed this early fascination with oral history into a potent research tool. Contact with not only the original architect of a building but also the original client, engineer, builder or landscape designer has been established as a key component in the process of documenting and assessing later twentieth century heritage places. Conversation with design professionals involved in a project can provide rare insight into design origins, influences and inspiration, and place the building into in a clearer architectural chronological or even geographical context. At the same time, an interview with a building's original client can reveal further clues to the rationale of its form, materials and finishes, as well as patterns of settlement and professional networking.

DESIGN SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

The Architect

Obviously, a building's architect is in a unique position to reveal the sources or influences on its design. Even a brief discussion of a designer's background, education, office experience and interests can place the design of a building in a clearer architectural context than any desktop analysis could hope to achieve. I have interviewed architects who have cheerfully acknowledged the profound influence of a particular architect or mentor. Individuals such as Rex Patrick, Ken Rendell and Geoffrey Woodfall have confessed to us their early fascination with Frank Lloyd Wright, while a perhaps unsurprising number of Melbourne architects who studied at the University in the late 1940s have paid homage to the influence of Roy Grounds, senior design lecturer. Others have spoken of the impact of working, studying or travelling overseas. An interview with Melbourne architect James Earle, best known as a designer of modernist Methodist churches in the 1950s and '60s, revealed that he had studied design at the Swedish Institute in 1951 and then attended the Festival of Britain in London – two simple facts that surely informed the all-inclusive approach to design that he adopted in much of his subsequent work. He also recalled a later visit to the United States to study modern church architecture – and his flip admission that he went out of his way to visit Pietro Belluschi's Central Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon (1948-50) provides a useful lead in assessing the architectural context of churches that Earle himself designed in Melbourne, most notably the Methodist Church at in Pascoe Vale South (1960).

When discussing specific buildings with their architects, hitherto unreported facts can emerge concerning design origins or symbolism. Asking Jewish architect Abraham Weinstock about an octagonal-planned synagogue in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton established that the form was intended as an allusion to the Star of David (interview with Mr A Weinstock, 13 July 2007). Conversations with the nonagenarian Roy Prentice, Chief Architect of the Housing Commission of Victoria from 1958 to 1972, revealed that the red-and-white striped exterior colour scheme of *Park Towers*, his most celebrated high-rise public housing development, was a flippant homage to the colours of the local football team (interview with Mr R Prentice, 2005). Mr Prentice also admitted to a lifelong fascination with ecclesiastical architecture, dating back to his teenage employment in the office of the prolific Anglican architect Louis Williams. While this might not necessarily inform an appreciation of his controversial work with the Housing Commission, it did explain one of his more baffling private projects of that era – a memorial garden and lych gate laid out in the grounds of St John's Church, East Malvern, in 1964.

Interviews of this nature can also reveal sometimes surprising stories behind the selection of forms and materials. Harry Ernest, a Melbourne architect best known as the designer of *Chelsea House*, one of the first freestanding curtain-walled office blocks in the city (1957) told us the coloured glass proposed for the window spandrels was available in only two colours – black or dark blue (interview with Mr H Ernest, 14 May 2008). He ruefully admitted that although he personally preferred the black glass, his client had demanded the blue – a split-second decision that would have resulted in a building of rather different appearance. Another time, I was assessing an eye-catching organic-style brick house in East Brighton, designed and occupied by Alan Hough of Jorgenson & Hough, Melbourne's leading designers of hotels and motels in the later 1960s. In conversation, Mr Hough informed us that his house not only represented one of the firm's rare foray into private residential architecture, but also incorporated a great deal of leftover material, such as specially made bricks and glazed terracotta tiles, which were originally made for one of their most celebrated commercial projects of the day, the award-winning Burvale Hotel in Vermont South (interview with Mr A Hough, 18 July 2007).

The Architect's Library

I have also quizzed architects on the influence of published sources in the design of specific buildings – a link that is often sought but notoriously difficult to establish without such clues. During our interviews, James Earle admitted to a preference for subscribing to the *British Architectural Review* and the US-based *Progressive Architecture*. Even a quick glance at the office bookshelves of this noted ecclesiastical architect revealed that he possessed copies of such monographs as Anton Henze and Theodor Filthaut's *Contemporary Church Art* (1956) and G E Kidder Smith's *New Churches of Europe* (1964). The architect of one of Australia's first modern motels – erected at Canberra in 1955 – acknowledged the influence of a popular American monograph on the topic, which had been published by Geoffrey Baker and Bruno Funaro that same year (interview with Brian O'Connor, 2009). It can then be left to the dedicated researcher to peruse and pursue such sources in the hope of finding that elusive link.

Engagement with an architect's professional library is not only a useful tool in suggesting design inspiration, but also one that can operate *in absentia* or even *post mortem*. When architectural publications from disbursed professional libraries invariably turn up in second-hand bookshops, a scrawled signature or office stamp on the flyleaf can invite the same sort of informed speculation. Looking, for example, at such a distinctive building as the Total Carpark in Melbourne, designed by architects Bogle & Banfield in 1965, it was of enormous value to stumble across a copy of Dietrich Klose's monograph, *Multistorey Carparks and Garages*, published that same year and bearing the Bogle & Banfield office stamp. Similarly, a copy of Anthony Thompson's 1963 book, *Library Buildings of Britain and Europe* was found to contain the name and address of architect Harry Winbush, who designed a municipal library for the City of Essendon the following year. Not only did this book suggest some useful clues to the design origins of the building but actually contained, interleaved within the pages, a loose sheet of scribbled notes and diagrams made by Winbush himself.

PLACING PROJECTS IN CONTEXT

The Chronological Context

Given that the architectural significance of a place is so often informed by a comparative analysis of an architect's work, a conversation with the designer themselves can greatly assist in placing the building in a broader chronological context. In this way, one can readily identify those buildings that are significant because they represent a notably early or late example of a particular architect's work, or otherwise reflect a significant turning point in his or her career.

In a recent study of post-war places of potential state significance, we had hoped to include all of the Melbourne houses featured in Neil Clerehan's seminal 1961 monograph, *Best Australian Houses*. When I asked architect Harry Ernest about the striking flat-roofed house that he had contributed to the book, I was surprised to learn that it actually represented his first residential commissions, having been built some five years earlier as a residence for his parents (interview with Mr H Ernest, 14 May 2008). The house, with slick modernist stylings that would characterise much of Ernest's subsequent residential output, thus accrued an additional layer of architectural significance as an important benchmark in its designer's career.

Similar circumstances surrounded a house in Brighton that was designed in 1970 by architect Peter Crone – now a well-known, oft-published and multi-award winning practitioner, but then a young recent graduate who snared the commission only because he was a friend of the client's wife. An interview with Peter Crone revealed that this was not only his first independent project, but also that he was in fact, still employed at the time in the office of Bernard Joyce, and would not open his own office until some years later (interview with Mr P Crone, 11 April 2008). Again, an additional layer of architectural significance was revealed. The interview also revealed an amusing postscript: the house that Crone designed was nominated for an RAI A award in 1971 alongside another – coincidentally, also situated in Brighton – which he had designed under the auspices of Bernard Joyce's office. As fate had it, the award went to the latter.

Assessing an unusual flat-roofed concrete block dwelling in East Brighton, I was initially intrigued that it was attributed to McGlashan & Everist – best known as the designers of award-winning modernist houses for art patrons John and Sunday Reed at Aspendale (1961) and Bulleen (1967). Although a slender monograph had recently been published on this important post-war partnership, it seemed to gloss over their work prior to 1960. The Brighton house had been commissioned in 1957 by a local manufacturer who had known David McGlashan from their secondary school days at Wesley College (interview with Mr J Barry, 2008). Our suspicion that the house might then be of great importance as the architect's earliest residential project was readily confirmed by a quick telephone call to the surviving partner (interview with Mr N Everist, 2008). In this case, contact with the original client also resulted in an unexpected prize from the family archives: a series of early photographs of the completed building and a cache of original architect's drawings that included unique preliminary pencil sketches by McGlashan himself.

The Geographical Context

When undertaking a heritage study for a particularly municipality, it can be very helpful, for comparative assessment, to know how just many examples of a particular architect's work may exist there. Again, the architect themselves can be the most reliable source of such information. This was most useful in our recent architectural study of the beachside suburb of Beaumaris, which was a noted epicentre for experimental architect-designed housing in the 1950s and '60s. A fine modern house by Neil Clerehan was deemed to be of exquisite rarity at the local level when a conversation with Mr Clerehan revealed that, although he had designed many houses in the area at that time, all of these, save for the subject building, had since been demolished. Another house in the same suburb, designed by first-string modernist Peter McIntyre in 1956, was also revealed to be something of a local rarity, when Mr McIntyre admitted to us that "Beaumaris just wasn't my area" and that the commission represented, for him, a relatively rare foray outside of Melbourne's eastern suburbs (interview with Mr P McIntyre, 1 June 2007).

Architects and Self-evaluation

I have spoken with architects who have a remarkable facility for self-evaluation, when asked to identify what they consider as their best works. Geoffrey Woodfall, a leading architect of the Wrightian organic style of the 1960s, nominated an interesting block of townhouses in Brighton as his finest work in the municipality, while dismissing a nearby house, designed by him some years later, as a “bread and butter” commission of little aesthetic merit (interview with Mr G Woodfall, 14 March 2008). In conversation with James Earle, the architect confessed that he did not consider himself a producer of “icons”, but went on to nominate several of his modernist church designs that he considered to be particularly representative of the firm's work or that were were personal favorites (interview with Mr J Earle, 2006). Other architects by contrast, mysteriously seem to lack the ability to appraise the relative significance of their own work.

PLACING DESIGNERS IN CONTEXT

The Underrated and Undocumented

Another recurring phenomenon we have encountered in the assessment of post-war heritage is the discovery of interesting buildings designed by architects who are not (or not yet) household names. For every building by Harry Seidler, Robin Boyd or other monographed here, there are countless others by designers whose names remain absent from recent theses and exhibitions, from contemporary journals and guidebooks, or even from professional directories. In such cases, a conversation with the architect themselves can be the only means of placing a designer in their broader context.

Often, an apparently unknown architect is revealed as an employee of one of the large and prominent architectural practices of the day. I have encountered this scenario several times as in the case of three interesting modern houses designed and occupied by three architects named Kenneth: the homes of Ken Atkins and Ken Rendell in Beaumaris, and Ken Hardcastle in Ashburton. Their names drew blanks from all published sources until personal communication identified them, respectively, as members of the prominent city offices of J F D Scarborough, Godfrey Spowers and Don Hendry Fulton. This knowledge immediately placed the houses in a much clearer architectural context, where the possible influence of a founding partner, or of the firm's 'house style' could be explored as a separate line of enquiry. Of course, other enlightening snippets also emerged from our interviews, such as Ken Rendell's explanation of the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright (interview, 16 May 2008), or Ken Hardcastle's observation that he later adapted the design of his own house into a standard plan for the Small Homes Services of the RVIA (interview, 17 March 2009).

Perhaps one of the most intriguing examples concerned a fine modernist house in Black Rock, designed in 1954 for the retired test cricketer Lindsay Hassett by an architect identified as Donald Crone. I immediately wondered if this was the same Donald Crone who later achieved fame in Sydney as a designer of such prominent city buildings as the Chevron Hilton and later the Centrepoint Tower. Although Crone died in 1994, conversations with his son and nephew – both architects – confirmed that he was indeed born in Melbourne and worked there during the 1950s, although neither source could provide more background to the elusive Hassett house. While Lindsay Hassett was also no longer with living, I tracked down his 90-year-old widow, living in Port Macquarie, who provided the missing piece of the puzzle (interview with Mrs T Hassett, 10 April 2008). She confirmed that the young Don Crone was actually working at that time for Roy Grounds, and was commissioned only because of a longstanding friendship between Crone and her husband. This modest one-off residential project could thus be conclusively identified not only as this important architect's earliest known independent commissions, but also the only recorded example of his work in Victoria. The building was subsequently recommended for inclusion on the *Victorian Heritage Register*.

Perhaps our most spectacular coup in the application of oral history regarded an apparently modest suburban house in Cheltenham, which caught our eye simply for its butterfly roof and bold 1950s styling. While photographing the property, the current owner emerged and told us that she had been led to believe by a previous owner that it was an experimental steel-framed house built by a visiting Englishman who represented an overseas firm – although she could recall neither his name nor the name of his company. I was able to identify the original owner as engineer Charles Cook, but, on learning of his early death in 1966, the research trail remained cold – until he tracked down a surviving son-in-law, also an engineer, who recalled the construction of the house with sparkling clarity (interview with Mr A Hoyle, 21 May 2008). As it turned out, Charles Cook had been sent out to Australia as the local representative of the British-based Trusteel Corporation, which had been commissioned by the Victorian State Government to supply prefabricated steel-framed hospitals. Several of these hospitals were built in regional centres before the program was discontinued around 1955, whereupon managing director Charles Cook used the leftover components to build a house for himself in Cheltenham. What had initially appeared to us as a mildly interesting butterfly-roofed dwelling was suddenly elevated to something of far greater historic and technological significance – perhaps even at a state level. Again, a remarkable story that would never have emerged without recourse to oral history.

THE VALUE OF THE CLIENT'S VIEWPOINT

Selecting a Suburb

In a recent study of post-war heritage places undertaken for a bayside municipality, we identified the beach suburb of Beaumaris as a particularly notable epicentre for modern architect-designed housing. This huge tract of undeveloped bushland – originally acquired by a rubber factory as the site for their new factory – was finally subdivided from the early 1950s and soon attracted the attention of the emerging generation of young progressive architects. In assessing a number of individual dwellings on the estate, I interviewed many original residents, asking why they had chosen to settle in Beaumaris. Some prospective residents had been attracted by family connections, by childhood or adolescent memories of the beaches, by an interest in sailing and watersports, or by a fondness for native gardens and the bushland setting. Some residents explained their rationale behind site selection, with one ruefully admitting that he had purchased an elevated hillside allotment because all the best beachside blocks had already been sold (interview with Mr K J Burgess, 27 June 2007). His choice, however, was to have a profound impact on the design of the house that was subsequently designed for him by Chancellor & Patrick, with all living areas at the upper level, plus a pop-up belvedere, to exploit the views across the bay.

Engaging an Architect

Simply asking a homeowner why they chose a particular architect lifted the lid on some interesting patterns of networking. Some turned to in-laws, family friends, neighbours, alumni from university or distant schooldays or members of a particularly ethnic, national or religious group. Others simply turned to architects whom they knew socially.

One early post-war resident of Beaumaris, who worked as a 'Girl Friday' in the office of furniture designer Grant Featherston, told us that she and her husband engaged architects John & Phyllis Murphy solely on the recommendation of her employer (interview with Mrs E Andrews, 2008). In the next street, architect James Earle designed a house for engineer Roy Hardcastle, who acted as Earle's regular structural consultant for more than four decades (interview with Mr J Earle, 2006). A commercial artist who wanted to build a new family home in Black Rock was introduced to architect Max May through a mutual friend, timber joiner John Shugg, of Shug sashless window fame (interview with Mr W Veale, 2007). In one intriguing twist, I encountered a couple who told us that were close friends with the prominent Melbourne architect John Baird, but had shrewdly decided against commissioning him to design their home on the grounds that it might damage their friendship. They turned instead, on Baird's gracious recommendation, to John Mockridge of Mockridge, Stahle & Mitchell (interview with Mrs A Grutzner, 25 June 2007).

A former client of Prairie Scholar David Godsell, confessed to us that he engaged the architect not because he was a particular admirer of Godsell's idiosyncratic Wrightian style, but simply because his wife was a close friend of the architect's sister. (interview with Mr B Chapman, July 2007) He further revealed that he was won over solely by the architects' insistence that the proposed house – to be constructed of textured concrete block, concrete slab-on-ground floors and untreated timber – would never require painting or any other maintenance.

Stories of serendipity and missed opportunities have also emerged. One couple who planned to build their new home in Beaumaris in 1952 commissioned Chancellor & Patrick after their original choice, Roy Grounds, became unavailable on travelling overseas. Another early resident of the suburb had initially approached the architectural firm of Middleton & Talbot, only to have their commission turned down because it was perceived to be too small (interview with Mrs N Gye, 16 May 2008). The couple turned instead to James Earle, as they had recently seen an example of his residential work – in nearby Hampton – published in a popular housing journal of the day.

The appointment of an architect because of prior knowledge or admiration of their work, either through encountering published examples or actual houses, has been a recurring theme in the memories of mid-century homeowners that we have interviewed. In some cases, a chain of influence can be identified. One client engaged Chancellor & Patrick to design his new house in Beaumaris because he had admired a house that the same architects had designed nearby for novelist John Iggulden and his wife (interview with Mr K J Burgess, 27 June 2007). Mrs Iggulden, in turn, revealed to us that she and her husband had chosen their architects because they were avid readers of the journal *Architecture & Arts*, in which David Chancellor's work was frequently published in the early 1950s (interview with Mrs H Iggulden, 2007). Fittingly, the Iggulden's own house would be published in the same journal in August 1957.

Other conversations reveal that Robin Boyd and Neil Clerehan, as successive directors of the Small Homes Service of the RVIA in the 1950s, obtained some of their early residential commissions because of this association, and the high public profile generated by their published writings on modern housing. A client of Robin Boyd told us that she and her husband had engaged him to design their new house in 1952 because they were much impressed by his book, *The Australian Home*, published that same year (interview with Mrs K Bergin, 2003). Another early resident of Beaumaris was an admirer of Clerehan's work, and contacted him through the Small Homes Service (interview with Mr G Weate, 17 July 2007). It might also be noted that conversations with clients of the Small Homes Service is by far the most effective means of locating surviving examples, which are otherwise notoriously difficult to identify in the field because client names and addresses were seldom published in the weekly newspaper column. Examples have even emerged serendipitously, as when a former client of John & Phyllis Murphy revealed to us that the house next door to hers was a Small Homes Service design (interview with Mrs E Andrews, 2008)

Design and Construction

The original client should never be overlooked when seeking background to the creation of a building. Indeed, experience has shown us that it is often the client, rather than the architect, who retains the most vivid recollections of a building's design and construction. This should not surprise when one considers the sheer number of commissions that any architect may carry out during a long career, as opposed to the homeowner who invariably goes through this process only once. A conversation with the original client, therefore, can provide valuable insight on planning decisions, material selection, furnishing and other seemingly prosaic decisions that have a significant impact on the built form. This is ably illustrated in the case of an unusual concrete block house in Brighton, designed by Montgomery, King & Trengove in 1962, which fascinated us for its quirky internal planning, with long vistas, overlapping mezzanines and internal balconies. All of this, however, suddenly made sense when the original owner informed us that the house had been carefully designed for entertaining and, more specifically, as a venue for the musical and vocal recitals that she and her husband liked to perform in their own home (interview with Mrs R Shallcross, 26 July 2007).

Discussions with original homeowners can also resolve thorny issues of attribution, and provide objective insight into an architect's design process. A couple who engaged the firm of McGlashan & Everist to design their new house in Brighton East in 1957 not only confirmed that David McGlashan was responsible for the design, but also recalled their his fondness for a limited palette of materials – quoting their architect as saying that they could choose only three materials for their new house “and if you want any more, we'll have to talk about it!” (interview with Mr J Barry, 2008). In a similar vein, a one-time client of Grounds, Romberg & Boyd reported to us that she largely dealt with Roy Grounds as partner-in-charge, although recalled that Robin Boyd conducted some of the site inspections, recommended that Grant Featherston be brought in to design the furniture, and also revised the fenestration - “a word I had never heard before!” (interview with Mrs P Dobson, 10 February 1999). She retained vivid memories of Roy Grounds' booming laughter and steadfast refusal to design to a budget – opting instead to provide the couple with a scheme for their ideal dream home, then paring it down to an affordable alternative. Further anecdotes helped to interpret the building as it appears today, including the admission that she and her husband had rejected Grounds' initial proposal for an enormous master bedroom, replacing it with much smaller bedrooms and a double carport.

Documenting Changes

When interviewing original clients, I always ask how long they remained living in their architect-designed house. Interesting stories inevitably emerge. Some occupants remained there for only a short period due to family reasons, a change of employment, or a move interstate. Others remain in residence for decades and, in a few especially pleasing cases, were still living there at the time of our interview. These long-term residents remain in a unique position to comment on the intactness and physical integrity of the building as it stands today – significant criteria in the assessment of its heritage value.

Speaking of the house that Don Crone designed for her in 1954, Mrs Lindsay Hassett mentioned its innovative original finishes – vertical timber cladding with a marine-quality varnish, and a low-pitched roof with its tar coating. Although she stressed that no major changes were made to the house during her two decades in residence, she added that the exterior varnish – which was “supposed to last forever” - did not weather well, and was eventually overpainted, while the tar-coated roof leaked relentlessly and would eventually be replaced by conventional tray deck roofing by a subsequent owner (interview with Mrs T Hassett, 10 April 2008). Another homeowner recalled a similar saga of experimental roofing gone awry in the house that Robin Boyd designed for her in 1952. This had a flat roof – one of the first, she insisted to us, built in Melbourne after the War – finished with a built-up aluminum foil. Again, this leaked after the first heavy storm and, notwithstanding angry phone calls to Mr Boyd, the problem was not satisfactorily resolved until conventional sheet roofing was superimposed (interview with Mrs K Bergin, 30 September 2003).

POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF ORAL HISTORY

Re-written History

There is, of course, a downside to oral history. A person's recollections should never be considered infallible, and it is important to verify facts through other sources if possible. Witness the example of the late Sonia Skipper, daughter of one of Walter Burley Griffin's residential clients in Melbourne, who adamantly insisted to this writer (letter, dated 17 July 1994) that her parents' house in Eaglemont was not designed by Griffin but rather by a student of his by the name of Stevenson – a claim that was readily refuted by reference to the original working drawings, which indisputably bear Griffin's names. Caution, therefore, is recommended.

In cases where I have been lucky enough to speak with both the architect and client of a house, conflicting accounts have sometimes arisen. There was the strange case of a house designed for an artist, where architect and client each claimed (in separate interviews) that the design was predominantly their own. In another example, two architects who were briefly in partnership each

put forward a convincing explanation of why he should be credited alone with the design of a particular house. In a similar vein, a former husband-and-wife architectural team – long since divorced – each claimed authorship of a particular residential design as their own, asserting that the other party merely drafted the plans.

Opposition

Perhaps the most baffling scenario has been when an architect has actually opposed the heritage listing of a building that he designed. One retired gent, who still lived in an eye-catching glass-walled house that he designed for himself in 1953, asserted that there was nothing exceptional about it and pointedly refused to any provide further information about either the building or his own career. Fortuitously, information about this elusive designer was obtained by asking one of his contemporaries, who was able to confirm that he was employed in one of the larger city architectural offices of the day. In a similar twist, the widow of another architect, still living in the house that her husband (a former employee of Maxwell Fry) had designed for them in 1953, objected to a proposed heritage listing on the grounds that the house was, in her opinion, of no significance. Luckily, I was able to track down an article, published just before the architect's death in 2006, in which he placed on record his memories of the design, construction and significance of his own home – with, ironically, both himself and his wife expressing their sadness that the building (described as a “beautifully planned and proportioned house”) would inevitably be demolished in the future.

Another architect adopted a particularly defiant anti-heritage stance during our interview, demanding to know if the current owner of the house, which he had designed four decades earlier, would be compensated for the inconvenience of a heritage listing. We have also encountered instances where an interesting architect-designed of the 1950s or '60s was still occupied by its original owner – who now objected most strenuously to any proposed heritage listing. Only once, however, have we been obliged to defend our assessment before an independent planning panel, with the original client's family other side of the table. The panel ruled in favour of the proposed listing, despite efforts of the opposing camp to argue that their family home of five decades – a striking flat-roofed modernist house planned on a polygonal module – was of no heritage significance.

Still, we have found that the briefly frustrating possibility of self-aggrandisement, post-justification, non-cooperation or even open hostility is but a small price to pay for a conduit to information and insight that can inform a heritage assessment in a hitherto unprecedented way.

REFERENCES

Most of the interviews cited in this paper were conducted by the author during 2007-2008 when he was working in the office of Heritage Alliance on the *City of Bayside Inter-war and Post-War Heritage Study*, the first study of its type ever commissioned by a Victorian municipality. Notes from these interviews, held in the files of Heritage Alliance, are quoted and referenced in this paper through the kind permission of the principal, Mr David Wixted.