

PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

ADDRESS

16 Glenroy Road

TYPE

- Single Residence
- Shop
- Office
- Landscape feature
- View
- Multiple Unit Res.
- Outbuildings
- Industrial Building
- Public building
- Other

TITLE

"Cottingley"

EXISTING DESIGNATION

HBR [ ] GBR [ ] AHC [ ] NT [ ] VAS [ ]

STREETSCAPE LEVEL

1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [x]  
 SIGNIFICANT [ ] SIGNIFICANT [ ]  
 STREET TREES KERB & GUTTERS

GRADING

A [ ] B [x] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ]  
 KEYNOTE BUILDING [ ]

RECOMMENDED FOR

HBR/GBR [ ] AHC [x] URBAN CONSERVATION AREA [ ]  
 VAS [ ] PLANNING SCHEME PROTECTION [x]  
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE [ ] OTHER [ ]

SURVEY DATE Nov. 91.  
 NEG FILE 57.22-26  
 Title  
 Vol.  
 Fol.

THEME

- Early Settlement
- Mansions
- Victorian Garden Suburb
- Municipal dev.
- 1870s growth
- Garden villas
- Working enclaves
- Commercial Centres
- Edwardian Prosperity
- Interwar Housing
- Flats and Offices

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Date 1926  
 Architect Edward Fielder  
 Builder Billson.  
 Elements -  
 House, garden, portico etc



- Contributing garden
- Landmark tree
- Original or early hard landscape layout
- Original or early fence

NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

See attached

INTEGRITY Good [x]  
 Fair [ ]  
 Poor [ ]

CONDITION Good [x]  
 Fair [ ]  
 Poor [ ]

CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated significant garden [ ]

16 GLENROY ROAD  
"COTTINGLEY"

### History

"Cottingley" was built in 1926 to the designs of the architect, Edward Fielder Billson, for Mr. and Mrs. George Silcock. It was planned to express "a new spirit in Architectonics". An article by Billson in *The Australian Home Beautiful* on the completion of the building, explained his design for this house as "Seeking the New Note in Architecture".<sup>1</sup> The article contains a ground plan,<sup>2</sup> a view of the exterior and several interior views of the entrance hall, living room and dining room.<sup>3</sup>

Billson explains the then current battle between the Georgian and Spanish styles and proffers a solution more suitable to our climate and functional requirements. He explains the architects task as follows:

"Of course, it is the architect's task in working out the design on this basis, to determine the relative placing of rooms, of space and masses, in such a way that a pleasing and interesting whole is finally obtained.

To the casual observer this fundamental underlying law may not be apparent, but it is responsible, nevertheless, for the rhythm and balance and symmetry that are so characteristic of designs that are governed by this principle. Its importance cannot be overestimated. Through the ages, the masterpieces of architecture have demonstrated its truth and it is the secret of architectural beauty.

If we could develop an Architecture that is characteristic of our country, our architects must not lose sight of these rigorous laws of number and dimension. Cast out the thought that there is nothing further to say in Architecture. Let us recognise Architecture as a creative art and cease imitating. We do not admit that the last word has been said with any of the other fine Arts - we expect new paintings, new books, new songs, new sculpture, but not new Architecture. A building that would speak in a new tongue is dubbed a freak. There is no encouragement to those who would not be slaves to precedent - they are outcasts if they do not follow on and repeat the classics of another age, and this particularly applies in buildings of monumental character. The fact that these were influenced largely by the limitations of the materials available then, and that a new plastic material has come into use in the twentieth century, viz., reinforced concrete, does not matter. We persist in moulding the new material in the old forms, notwithstanding the fact that this has not such limitations, but wholly different and infinite possibilities. As well as concrete as a structural material, the steel frame method of construction has been perfected and buildings may now soar up with impunity, save for municipal restrictions".<sup>4</sup>

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1. *The Australian Home Beautiful*, 1 Oct. 1926, p.26.
  2. *Ibid.* p.28.
  3. *Ibid.* pp. 26, 27.
  4. *The Australian Home Beautiful*, 1 Oct. 1926, p.26.

## 16 Glenroy Road continued

Revolutionary as this article sounds, Billson was not devising a new architecture himself, rather he was working within the philosophy, design intent and detailing of Walter Burley Griffin.

Griffin's designs arose from the Prairie School in America, where he along with his wife Marion Mahoney was closely associated with Frank Lloyd Wright. Their revolutionary designs altered the course of American architecture from the end of the nineteenth century. Griffin won the competition for the design of Canberra and came to Australia in 1913. Within a year his pioneering modernism was widely known. Characteristics of his style were; flowing plans, functional arrangement of spaces, honest use of materials, experimentation with new materials, the floating roof with wide eaves, a strong sense of the house belonging to the ground, and a strong relationship between the house and its landscape. Griffin's Lippincott house in Heidelberg in 1917 illustrates this. It also shows his frequently used multipaned windows.

Billson was Griffin's only articulated student. He completed several projects considerably influenced by his work with Griffin including, the Armstrong house in Caulfield of 1919, and Woodlands Golf Club House in 1925. He received an honourable mention in the Chicago Tribune Competition of 1922. Billson worked with Lippincott, Griffin's principal follower. Nicholls was the remaining main player in this modern architecture. Together the four comprised Australia's Prairie School.

Aspects of Griffin's design evident here are many. The windows are a case in point. Similar patterns are used on Griffin's Lippincott house of 1917, at Castlecraig in the early 1920s and even on his early first decade American houses. Even Billson's plan is drawn as Marion Mahoney would draw them.

### Description

Billson's use of Griffin's design principles does not detract from this design. It is a beautiful house innovatively planned and superbly detailed (see attached plan). The plan shows the most unusual side orientation of the house facing the somewhat narrow garden. There is no division between front and back, and the internal living spaces flow out via covered spaces or terraces to the ground beyond. Billson takes the then unthinkable step of having no living rooms facing the street, rather he places these functionally to get the best relationship with the site. The plan grows around an impressive entry under a porte-cochere. A little unrealistically, there is no garage, nonetheless, the porte cochere draws the house out into the landscape in a horizontal plane and scoops the viewer in. The hall is centrally located and on an axis with the diningroom on a raised level. To one side is the large living room, service activities are grouped beyond, bedrooms grouped to the other side of the hall. Billson incorporates built-in robes, and for the period, extensive storage elsewhere. A state of the art kitchen and laundry incorporate the most up to date facilities and appliances.

Externally the house is dominated by the two interesting gables. Below the wall planes are juxtaposed to create a plastic effect and the whole is anchored to the ground with an implied plinth. The geometrically divided casement windows decorate the exterior. Wide eaves shade the walls. A fence of render in bays with planter box piers completes the design.

## 16 Glenroy Road continued

### Assessment

Billson is a fine architect and this house illustrates his ability to plan and detail superbly. The design clearly owes a great deal to Griffin. It is a fine example of the Prairie type.

### Significance

Metropolitan

1. A superb example of Prairie house design inspired by Walter Burley Griffin but from the hand of Billson, his articulated assistant and an influential architect in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Few examples of this type survive in Melbourne.



# Seeking the New Note in Architecture

An Australian home that embodies unusual features.

By EDWARD FIELDER BILLSON

THE accompanying photos are views of an Australian home that expresses a new spirit in Architectonics and, therefore, should be of interest, not only to those contemplating building, but to Architects themselves. There is an ever recurring plea here for an architectural development—our own—and various writers, from time to time, have endeavored to convince readers that an adaption of a Georgian or Spanish style is best suited to our needs.

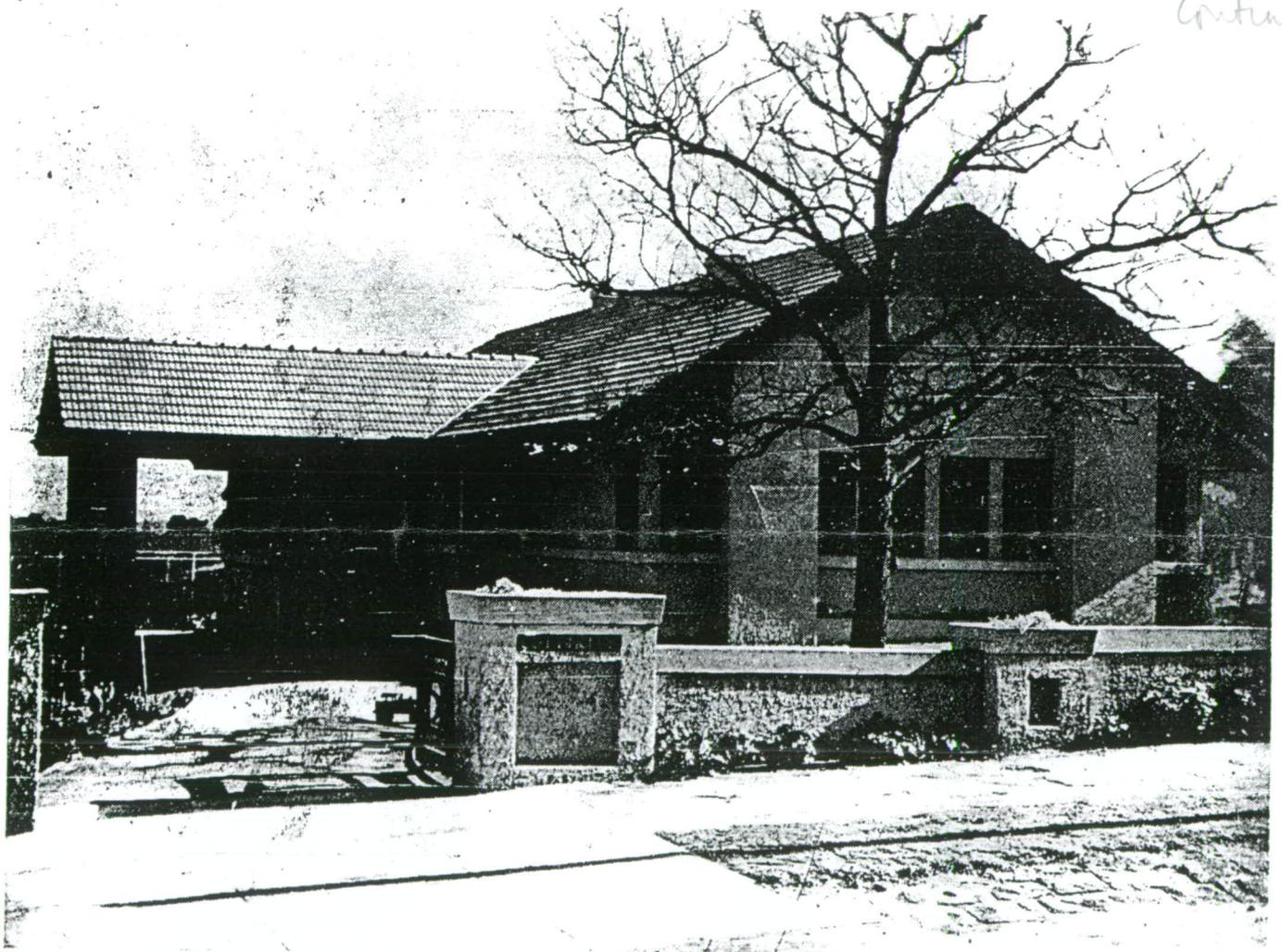
There seems to be a battle in progress at the moment between these two styles and whilst each of these styles in its proper setting is satisfying to the observer, it can hardly be argued that we are proceeding in a logical manner to produce an architecture of our own. Let us take inspiration, by all means, from the experience of the past, but let us not close our eyes to altered conditions and the progress of civilisation.

The illustrations depict a residence that has not been planned piecemeal, but is the outcome of an orderly arrangement of a number of definitely spaced units. There is rhythm in the building resulting from a rigid observance of this mathematical basis of architecture, and the design becomes something more than a random assembly of unrelated parts—it is an entity.

Of course, it is the architect's task in working out the design on this basis, to determine the relative placing of rooms, of space and masses, in such a way that a pleasing and interesting whole is finally obtained.

To the casual observer this fundamental underlying law may not be apparent, but it is responsible, nevertheless, for the rhythm and balance and symmetry that are so characteristic of designs that are governed by this principle. Its importance cannot be overestimated. Through the ages, the masterpieces of architecture have demonstrated its truth and it is the secret of architectural beauty.

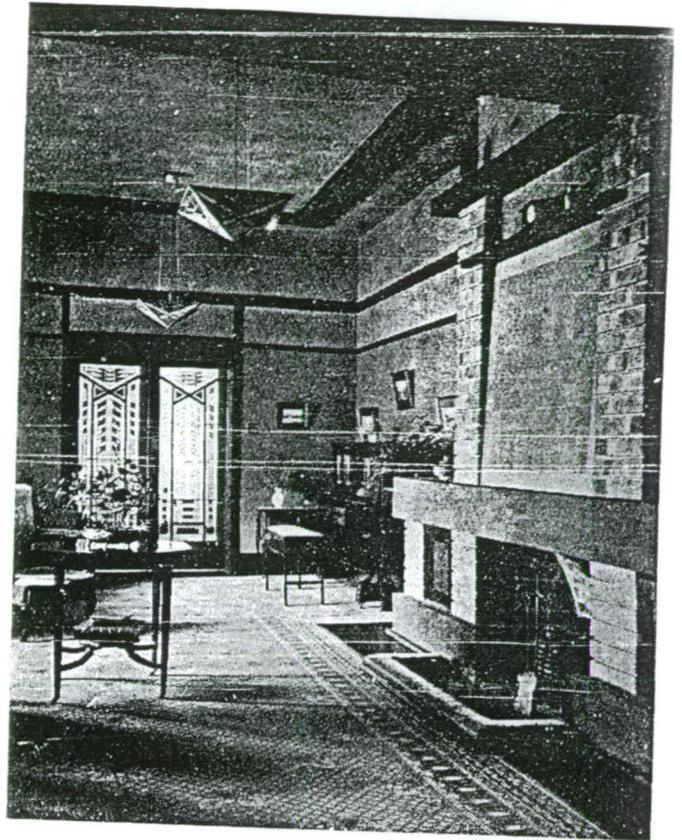
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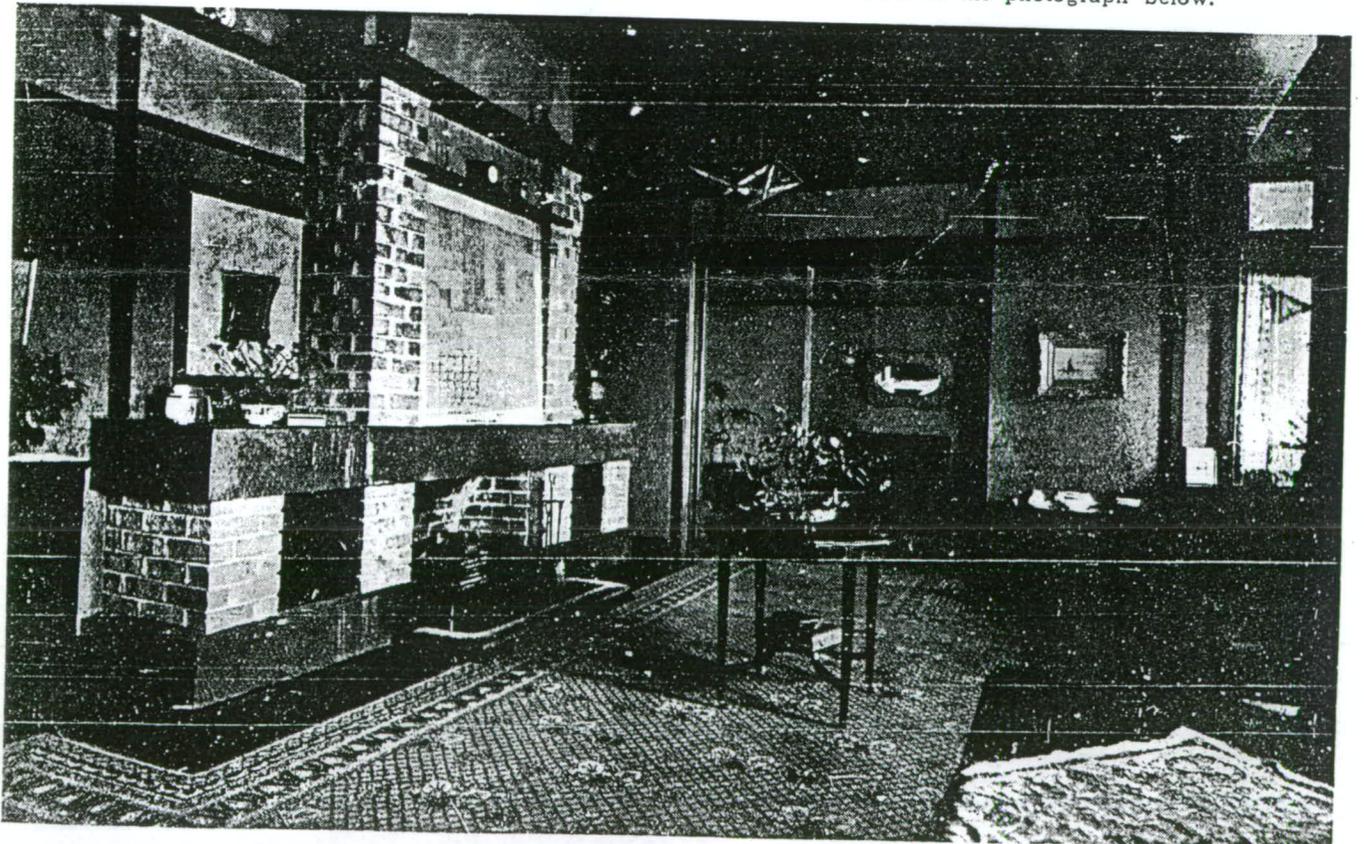
A residence in Hawthorn, embodying some original features, exterior and interior. The building has a fine substantial appearance without being heavy. The brick and cement fence enhances the appearance of the house, and the light-green tiles, extending over the porte cochere, with buff chimneys and brown barge boards, make the general tone most pleasing and harmonious.



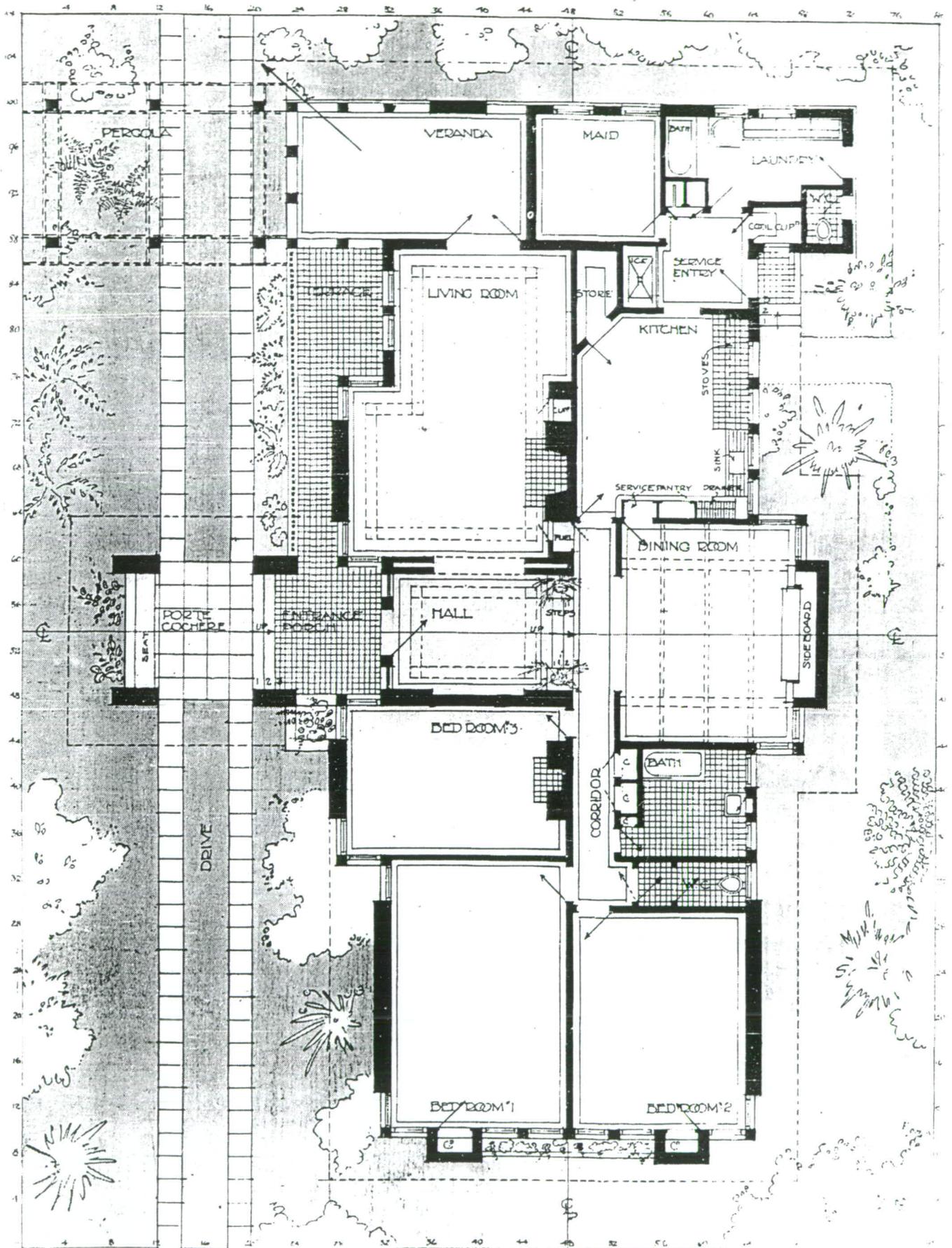
The entrance hall of "Cottingley," looking into the dining-room and showing the two-floor scheme with the service on the higher level, and the living portion on the lower.



A view of the living room looking out on to the verandah at the back taken from the opposite end to that shown in the photograph below.



Photograph of the living room looking through to the entrance hall. The sliding doors disappear into the wall. The fireplace of brick and cement is a feature, with fuel boxes at the sides and a large chimney.



PLAN OF THE SILOOCK RESIDENCE, HAWTHORN, BY EDWARD J. LEWIS, ARCHITECT

If we would develop an Architecture that is characteristic of our country, our architects must not lose sight of these rigorous laws of number and dimension. Cast out the thought that there is nothing further to say in Architecture. Let us recognise Architecture as a creative art and cease imitating. We do not admit that the last word has been said with any of the other fine Arts—we expect new paintings, new books, new songs, new sculpture, but not new Architecture. A building that would speak in a new tongue is dubbed a freak. There is no encouragement to those who would not be slaves to precedent—they are outcasts if they do not follow on and repeat the classics of another age, and this particularly applies in buildings of a monumental character. The fact that these were influenced largely by the limitations of the materials available then, and that a new plastic material has come into use in the twentieth century, viz., reinforced concrete, does not matter. We persist in moulding the new material in the old forms, notwithstanding the fact that this has no such limitations, but wholly different and infinite possibilities. As well as concrete as a structural material, the steel frame method of construction has been perfected and buildings may now soar up with impunity, save for municipal restrictions.

#### NEW IDEAS BUT OLD CONVENTIONS

Yet, there are those who still persist in smothering these structures with borrowed columns where no structural factor needs their service. It cannot be denied that the result looks absurd. What a logical thing it would be to express this structural feeling in a frank and honest manner instead of the sham we usually find. A whole front of stone has been observed during erection standing on stilts of steel and these are finally wrapped around with hollow cored stone columns. The apparent effect is that the stone columns are supporting many stories above, which, of course, is not the case, the steel core really does the work.

Why we persist in using for our very different problems today, forms which were perfected centuries ago, for an entirely different set of conditions is difficult to understand. To occasionally find a building not so contradictory is a refreshing thing, and though we may be sometimes shocked by the unusual forms used, it is, nevertheless, with the deepest interest that one watches these developments, for it is in this direction we must turn if we would develop a virile Architecture.

To return to the subject of the illustrations, an example of domestic architecture was purposely chosen, for it is in the homes of the people that we can best express a characteristic Architecture. One of the most objectionable features of the average home is its "back." We are in the habit of referring to the "front" and the "back" of the house. There should be no back to an architectural design. Lean-to roofs are an abomination and spoil all. It should not be necessary to apologise to the visitor when taken out to see the chickens—yet, how often one hears it.

All homes profess to have a front, some have sides, but how many have any backs? The half-way division fence of flimsy laths should be discouraged by architects. It is the beginning of this evil. How much better is the house set in the middle of the garden—put your trellis to screen the chickens, if you will, but don't bisect your lot and your house, too.

The home which is being used to illustrate the principles laid down was planned by me to give the owners, Mr and

Mrs George Silcock, Glenroy road, Hawthorn, the most convenient and spacious arrangement of rooms possible without sacrificing the architectural balance or the valley view from the rear of the lot. An orderly arrangement of rooms does not necessarily help the easy working of a house if the arrangement of fittings within those rooms is not also conveniently arranged. Being conscious of the waste spaces, ill-planned rooms, and inconvenient arrangements so often found, one endeavored to eliminate them. The system of planning adopted to achieve a dignified and artistic exterior has elsewhere been explained, a description of the interior should be interesting.

#### A TWO-LEVEL FLOOR

Although the house is a villa, the fall in the ground was such that, in order to save excessively high foundations, rooms were arranged on two levels, the one 18in. below the other. Besides effecting considerable economy in the cost of the foundations, this arrangement made possible a greater ceiling height consistent with the larger proportions of the living room, as well as providing an artistic terraced effect in the hall leading to the higher level. One enters the house from the entrance porch through a large glazed door, which, in common with other doors opening from the entrance hall, has been designed with a striking geometrical pattern of colored leaded glass. This glass work was specially designed by the architect to be in keeping with the architectural effect and the motif employed is repeated throughout. Even the semi-indirect electric light shades carry out the same idea. And so it is throughout the house, wherever ornament or decoration is applied it harmonises and becomes a part of the whole.

#### THE LIVING ROOM

Separated from the hall by sliding glazed doors is the living room. Glancing at the plan, one will see that these two rooms virtually are one when the doors are thrown back, the fireplace then becomes a central feature of the hall and living room combined, and has been massively designed in order to emphasise this fact. It is constructed of yellow bricks with a broad concrete lintel over the opening, which forms a low shelf on either side of the breast of the chimney. Beneath this shelf are cupboards on either side of the fireplace, the one to the right giving access to a conveniently placed fuel box which can be replenished from the back by means of a door close to the kitchen. Opposite this fireplace and architecturally centred on it is a large window recess, maintaining the feeling of one large room. A band of ornamental plaster in a quaint design, which echoes the pattern work of the glass work enriches the ceilings of hall and living room. Opening out of the living room, at the opposite end to the hall, is a sun verandah which has been placed to command the most desirable view from the site. It is entirely screened with bronze wire to make it fly proof. This verandah also becomes part of the living room, and gives a feeling of spaciousness.

Proceeding from the entrance hall to the dining room, one rises to the higher level by means of three low wide terraced steps. The dining room has four-fold glazed doors, which are intricate in their pattern work of amber, gold, and blue glass. The effect from the entrance hall of the light diffusing through this glass holds one spell-bound for a moment, and it has been described as reminiscent of a cathedral window, though, of course, the pattern work differs from ecclesiastical work. The remainder of the house, which includes the bedroom and kitchen and service portions, is on the one level with the dining room, so that there is no

*(Continued on Page 32)*

## Seeking the New Note in Architecture.

(Continued from Page 29)

inconvenience in the two level arrangement as far as the service is concerned. The added artistic effect due to the variation in levels can easily be imagined.

The dining room is panelled to the door height in Queensland maple in a natural wood finish with a frieze from the door height to the ceiling of gold. The windows are grouped around each corner, and between them is recessed the side-board opposite the folding doors. A service door is concealed in the panelling, giving direct access to shelves and drawers which are accessible also from the kitchen. This has proved a great labor saver and an ideal arrangement for serving and clearing the table.

### THE UP-TO-DATE KITCHEN

The kitchen, the door to which is secluded away from the entrances, is equipped with hinges which keep it always closed, preventing the intrusion of cooking odors to the main part of the house. The kitchen has a permanent floor of cork carpet, which is extraordinarily easy to the feet and noiseless. The kitchen is literally flooded with light from four large windows. The sink and drainer are of cast aluminium and placed directly under the window. To the right, within easy reach, is a draining rack sufficient to take the whole of the crockery in use. Adjacent are cupboards suspended above and leaving entirely unobstructed the work counter which extends along this wall. Under this counter are drawers and cupboards for the storage of kitchen utensils, as well as two tilting bins to hold sugar and flour. The kitchen gas stove is of the American table pattern in white enamel. A supplementary fuel stove is also installed in case of emergencies. Hot water is delivered to the kitchen as well as the bathroom from the electric heater which was the choice of the architect and owner after much consideration as to which form of heater was the most reliable and the greatest labor saver, as well as the least dangerous. Hot water is always available from the system installed, and the operating cost has been found quite satisfactory. Hot water is delivered to the kitchen sink by means of a combination fitment which stands above the sink. Two taps deliver cold or hot water or both through a single swivelled outlet which is so designed as to enable it to be thrown to one side while the sink is in use, thus eliminating the possibility of broken dishes so often the case where the taps project over the sink.

Opening from the kitchen is a store room for non-perishable supplies, also a door leading to the rear entrance. From here, one has access to the laundry, maid's room and cool cupboard and the back door. The cool cupboard has special provision for ventilation, which ensures a constant circulation of cool air through it, and below is a small cellarette.

Opposite the back door, yet convenient to it, is the ice box which has an overflow outlet to take away the water as the ice melts. Above the ice box is a big storage cupboard, where the winter blankets can be stowed away, during the summer time. Two other cupboards are placed here, also, one for the brooms and buckets, and one for the children's toys. A most necessary adjunct where one would have a tidy house.

The laundry serves a dual purpose in this house, for concealed under the ironing table is an extra bath for the use of the maids. The gas copper has an outlet also over the bath and, therefore, serves the dual purpose of bath heater and copper. The laundry can be directly entered from the outside as well as from the rear entrance.

The bedrooms are all grouped off a corridor at the opposite end of the house, and thus kept entirely separate from the service end. Three large bedrooms are arranged with built-in wardrobes and windows in each case on two sides of the room. Ventilation and light are, therefore, assured. The bathroom and toilet arrangements are handy to each of these rooms. Here is a departure from the old iceberg idea of snow white walls. The bath and basin are the only white fittings in the room. The bath is sunk a little into the floor, encased with tiled to prevent any water getting behind or under the bath and equipped with a plate glass shower screen. The walls are of a delicate pink shade of tiles, and the floor of a deeper tone constructed of a warm impervious material. The basin has installed above it a large built-in cupboard with a mirror for the reception of the various toilet requisites. It is the architect's contention that a house is incomplete when its walls and ceilings are left white and undecorated, and hence in the house described one of the conspicuous features is the decorations. The architect's work was made the easier by the enthusiasm of his clients to fall in with his ideas and not to insist that the rooms should be colored in those anaemic putty shades or depressing blue tones one so often encounters. One cannot understand why, in a land so packed full of glorious natural tonings such as we possess, owners insist on introducing such uninviting shades which fashion decrees are the vogue. The beautiful autumn tones to be found everywhere provide a beautiful range to select from for the decorative scheme.

In the instance under view, old gold was used for the wall surfaces up to the picture rail, above this, and including the ceiling a pale yellow tone was applied. The ornamental plaster band to the ceilings was picked out in a terra cotta hue. This coloring was used for the entrance hall, living room and passages, as it was thought inadvisable to have any contrast in rooms opening together.

The bedrooms were colored in varying schemes. One was toned in a soft apple green with ivory frieze and ceiling. Another in salmon and cream. Elsewhere the softest browns and greens tone into one another and blend so harmoniously that the whole gives a sense of real restfulness and ease. These coloring effects are obtained in a different manner from that usually employed. The walls are not finished with a smooth plaster, but, instead, have the sand grains brought to the surface to give them a texture. The colors applied are not opaque but transparent stains which do not clog up the surface but enter into and become part of the wall surface preserving the texture and inherent beauty of the finish.

### THE NEW CASEMENTS

The windows throughout the house are casement sash, swinging out. The writer can almost see the average woman shrug her shoulders at the suggestion of casement windows, but these are different. For, by the utilisation of a patent device, which is the invention of the architect, the windows can be operated without removing the bronze fly-proof screens which are attached to the inside of the windows. These make the windows thief proof in that the screens cannot be removed from the outside, as well as preventing curtains and draperies from blowing out the window. This is one of the chief objections to the old form of casements.

Outside the house is treated with rough cast, which is toned to a warm buff tone, the roof is of apple green tiles and the wood work stained brown, while the windows, which have a quaint pattern work of wood bars, are picked out in green to match the roof. Introduced into the windows are spots of opalescent glass of a delicate yellow-green tone that considerably add to the effect.



16 Glenroy Road



16 Glenroy Road