

RIVER HOUSE

Prepared by: Luke James, Extent Heritage (incorporating and updating 1988 citation by Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd)

Address: 3/2 Hodgson Street, Kew

Name: River House	Survey Date: 18 March 2021
Place Type: Residential	Architect: Peter McIntyre
Grading: Significant	Builder: McKinna Bros
	Engineer: Bill Irwin
Extent of Overlay: As per curtilage map below.	Construction Date: 1955 (altered 1958; 1960s)



Historical Context

Modern day Kew is bounded to its west and north by the river known in the Woi-wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people as *Birrarung* (or 'river of mists') and also known as the Yarra River, who were among the people of the eastern Kulin nations who inhabited the land until European colonisation and remain its Traditional Owners.

The following general historical summary is reproduced from Context Pty Ltd 2018: 32-33.

The first survey of the Kew area was by government surveyor Robert Hoddle, who divided the 1400 acres (570 hectares), the Parish of Boroondara, into 150 blocks of different sizes in 1837 (Morrissey 2008). Kew was divided into large

allotments to encourage the establishment of small farms and market gardens to supply the growing settlement of Melbourne. These larger allotments meant that future subdivision proceeded in a piecemeal way (Sanderson 1988:4/2).

Access to Kew was originally via a bridge to Hawthorn, opened in 1852, and by the privately owned Studley Park Bridge (nicknamed the Penny Bridge), opened in 1857. Direct access to Kew was gained when the Johnston Street Bridge was built in 1858. In 1856 the Boroondara Road Board District, comprising Kew, Hawthorn and Camberwell, was proclaimed (Victorian Places 2015).

The first houses in Kew were built in the 1850s around the area now known as the Kew Junction. During the gold rushes of the 1850s, speculation on land purchases increased and the region experienced rapid expansion. As Jane Carolan writes, Kew became a 'suburb of British expatriates who built their homes and gardens to replicate those left behind.' Many of the villas and mansions were built to overlook the city of Melbourne and were set in acres of land (Carolan 2003:3).

Subdivision of land to form residential estates in the Kew area occurred from the 1860s, although plans from the 1860s and 1870s suggest that the scale of subdivision was quite small. In the 1880s, Melbourne's land boom was influential in establishing Kew's residential street pattern (Sanderson 1988:4/7-9).

Subdivision slowed with the economic depression of the 1890s. However, by the end of 1897, housing construction had begun anew. In 1903, Kew was described by the Australian Handbook as a 'very favourite place of residence for the merchants and upper tradesmen of the city, and is dotted with their elegant mansions, villas, and well-kept gardens' (cited in Victorian Places 2015).

From 1920 Victoria experienced the highest marriage rate in its history and families sought homes away from the crowded inner suburbs of Melbourne. Following the tramlines, new estates were established in Kew. The pattern of expansion continued through the rest of the decade, and was reflected in the construction of War Service Homes, a scheme administered by the State Bank from July 1922, with houses in Kew built mostly on subdivisions in the north and east of the suburb. New subdivisions in the 1920s changed the rural nature of north Kew, as housing and large recreation reserves began to replace dairy farms and market gardens. Estates were also established on the grounds of former mansions. Between 1921 and 1933, Kew's population increased by 46.62% and its house numbers by 62.73% (Sanderson 1988:4/11-17). As a result of council policy to limit industry, Kew had only 29 factories in 1927 compared with Hawthorn's 140 (Morrissey 2008), further reinforcing its reputation as a genteel residential suburb.

Today, Kew retains evidence of this historical growth and development. As the City of Kew Urban Conservation Study states:

To the north and east twentieth century housing predominates, the result of the suburban expansion that followed both World Wars. In the rest of the suburb the housing is more mixed, a legacy of constant subdivision. For this reason Kew does not have significant nineteenth century streetscapes, but in the mixture of housing styles numerous important buildings remain, and in the individual examples both old and new, Kew's built heritage is almost a compendium of domestic architecture in Melbourne, from smaller family houses through to grand mansions (Sanderson 1988:4/25).

The historical context for this part of Kew also includes a history of flooding, and of notable architects'-designed own homes, set out in the *Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (Built Heritage Pty Ltd 2012: 24, 149, citations omitted) as follows:

It was not until the early twentieth century that the first official measures were taken to deal with the recurring problem of flooding. Four years after the flood of 1916, when the river rose to a height of 41.50 feet, the City of Kew set that figure as the minimum level for which building permits would be issued for new dwellings in the municipality. However, this figure would be revised twice over the next few years, when two more floods – each more serious than the one before – saw the municipal flood level increased to 44.6 feet (in 1923) and then 48.8 feet (in 1924). This proved satisfactory until the Great Flood of 1934, when the river rose to a record height of 60.6 feet. Eight years later, in February 1942, the Council officially adopted that height as the new municipal flood level below which no new subdivisions would be approved, and no building permits would be issued. An exception, however, was allowed if the low-lying site could be raised to a level approved by the MMBW, so that the sewerage could be connected to the main metropolitan system.

As Vaughan records, the increasing of the municipal flood level of 60.6 feet created hardship for property owners who, over the intervening two decades, had built dwellings (or merely purchased allotments) that were above the old flood level of 48.8 feet, but below the new one. Council dealt with diminished property values by acquiring much of this low lying land, which was redeveloped as riverside parks. The decision to increase the flood line was vindicated when, in October 1953, the Yarra River rose “almost to flood level”. During the early post-war era, as suburban infill began to spread across hitherto underdeveloped parts of the study area, remaining lots of low-lying land caught the attention of a new (and more adventurous) generation of homebuilders [including Peter McIntyre].

...

Kew's western fringe ... seemed to attract the most resident architects in the 1950s. Many In particular, were drawn to the booming Studley Park area; not only did this represent one of the last undeveloped suburbs close to Melbourne, but the site conditions – steep slopes, odd-shaped allotments, flood lines and web of drainage easements – represented a design challenge that architects found irresistible. The first architect to build his own house in Studley Park was John Colbourn, who designed a fine flat-roofed modernist house in Milfay Avenue in 1943. Others who followed included Stanley M C Evans (of the leading city firm of Tompkins, Shaw & Evans) in Yarravale Road (1949; demolished), Kurt Elsner in Stawell Street (1950) and Geoffrey Danne in Yarra Street (1954). South of Studley Park Road, in a small residential area bounded by Raven Street, Hodgson Street and the Yarra River, no fewer than four important and influential Melbourne architects built their own homes during the 1950s: Raymond Berg (1954; demolished), Peter McIntyre (1955), Ernest Milston (1956) and Don Hendry Fulton (c.1957). During this period, architect James Earle also designed a house for himself in Ridgeway Avenue, Kew (1954; since relocated). ... [John] Kenny's house [1978], in Raven Street, was built in the vicinity of those houses erected two decades earlier by Berg, Milston, McIntyre and Fulton. With the subsequent addition of Sean Godsell's own award-winning house on Hodgson Street (1997), this small area can be considered one of the most concentrated precincts of notable architect's own houses in the metropolitan area.

History

The land is located on a low ridge below the floodline of the eastern bank of *Birrarung* (Yarra River) just downstream from its confluence of the *Merri Merri* (Merri Creek). This confluence of waterways, today known as the site of the historical Dights Falls, was both a river crossing and important ceremonial location for the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have inhabited the area for tens of thousands of years (Day 2020; Fitzgerald and Ducrou, u.d.). The earliest known European occupant in the vicinity of the site was Scottish emigrant John Buchan, who in 1847 constructed 'Finhaven', a grand Victorian mansion located above the River House site, which was later demolished in 1940. This was joined by a number of other large Victorian mansions, including 'Swinton' (1859, later additions 1860s and 1880s, Boroondara HO129) (Day 2020; Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd 1988).

In 1947, 19-year-old architecture student Peter McIntyre, surveying a site in or around Hodgson Street, Kew for his father's architectural practice, decided to explore further down the site closer to the river, finding what he later recounted as 'the most beautiful piece of land' (Day 2020). The land adjoined the river in which McIntyre had spent formative moments of his Kew childhood swimming and exploring. In an unlikely series of events, the 19-year-old discovered the land was privately owned as a part of the former 'Finhaven', and had been inherited by John Buchan's descendants who had earmarked the flatter, higher parts of the site for development but had been advised by their surveyor that the section closest to the river was too steep and flood-prone to be developed. McIntyre nevertheless agreed verbally with the owners to purchase the riverside portion for £200—an amount the young McIntyre did not have immediately to hand. Delighted with his success, McIntyre began to survey the site and was noticed by an adjoining neighbour, who went on to learn McIntyre's plan and attempted to gazump the purchase with an offer of £1000, with plans to pool funds with his neighbours and subdivide the land so each could achieve absolute river frontage. Finally, however, the owners agreed to sell to McIntyre for £300. Wisely, McIntyre told his father subsequent to the purchase, which his father belatedly prohibited then funded, with a loan to be repaid through service to his firm (McCartney 2007: 65; Day 2020).

The romance at the heart of the site's evolution continued when, some years later, McIntyre asked an architecture student working at his first practice to assist on the project—via a marriage proposal (Goad, 2012: 444). Dione McIntyre, who married Peter in March 1954, supplied a painted sketch of the River House that shows its original distinctive colour scheme that caused the building to be likened by *Vogue* magazine to a 'Paul Klee butterfly (National Trust of Australia (Victoria)), demonstrating her important role in its design conception and giving life to its early moniker 'Butterfly House'.



Figure 1. Drawing by Dione McIntyre, 1953, McIntyre Collection, reproduced from the Australian Institute of Architects Nationally Significant 20th Century Architecture citation, at https://repository.architecture.com.au/download/notable_buildings/vic/mcintyre-housef6a0.pdf.

While construction was completed in 1955, the design of the River House was the product of a long gestation. McIntyre reportedly began working on the design in 1948, shortly after the sites purchase, with a documented reference to the distinctive design found in Peter McIntyre's tutor and mentor Robin Boyd's correspondence in 1952 (Day 2020). This timing is important, for as Day (2020) recounted, the concept of a house using a suspended 'coathanger' to achieve minimum interference with what was the edge of a rocky precipice 'preceded design work on the Olympic Pool', the iconic design by McIntyre with Kevin Borland and John & Phyllis Murphy (1952-56):

Design principles were similar in intent, a lean steel frame would support a lightweight cantilevered structure, which reduced expensive site works, and employed the minimum amount of materials for the maximum volume of construction.

The design was influenced by engineer Norman Mussen, who was lecturing on structures at Melbourne University, the time of Peter's final year. He championed the importance of being able to analyse the stresses in a building structure and he introduced notions of pre-tensioned and post-tensioned reinforced concrete which is the structural principle of counter balancing forces.

This structural system was later employed for the more complex Olympic Pool design.

Like the Olympic Pool, the River House was constructed in an era in which post-WW2 austerity had not yet lifted. For both buildings, construction techniques were influenced by the need to keep the use of scarce materials, especially steel, to a minimum. In the Olympic Pool, an engineering technique that harnessed counterbalancing forces enabled the building to use merely 1/3 of the material cost of competing entries. McIntyre describes the River House as an 'A-frame double cantilevered truss. Cantilevered in one direction and then balancing that cantilever with the other direction.' (McCartney 2007: 67). For the young Peter McIntyre building his own house with the advice of engineer Bill

Irwin, this technique not only reduced cost but more importantly made construction physically possible on a sharply constrained site. The site not only had a very limited buildable footprint, but required elevation of habitable areas above a flood level of which McIntyre would have been very aware, not only from childhood memories of the great flood of 1934, but the more recent October 1953 floods which would have vindicated the emerging design. McIntyre described the design for the River House as firstly and fundamentally a 'structural solution', designed from the 'outside in' (Pers. comm during site visit).

McIntyre recounted that no planning permit was required for the building (in 1953), and that he simply had to satisfy the Council that he need not be required to build in brick, as was otherwise stipulated for this part of the suburb. The building permit process involved furnishing a single A1 sheet of paper, with plans, elevations and a section, which revealed the two 40 foot cantilevers. Despite this, he recalled walking into the building surveyor's office only to emerge half an hour later with his building permit (Pers. comm during site visit).

The very same site factors that constrained the design went on to do the same for the construction method. Precast, pre-tensioned/post-tensioned concrete was used for the supporting structure and footings, with other structural members fabricated and assembled on site. As McIntyre recalled, because of the difficult site access 'there was no structural member of the cantilever truss any larger than 3 inches (7.5cm). We were able to fabricate it on the ground in small sections, bring it up by hand, lay it on the side of the hill, bolt it together then stand it up and roll it out' (McCartney 2007: 67). This combination of radical engineering applied to domestic architecture incorporating hand-construction techniques shows a degree of craft and ingenuity that belies the 'machine aesthetic' often associated with modernism.

While designed by a young bachelor, the River House came to be inhabited by Peter and Dione McIntyre and their growing family, ultimately including four children—three of whom became architects themselves—over four decades. This was enabled by external and internal additions and alterations over time, none of which altered the fundamental design expression or materiality, and many of which have been reversed. After ceasing to be the family's primary residence, River House was used to house the practice of McIntyre Partnership, Peter and Dione McIntyre's practice. Today both functions have moved elsewhere on the site, and it appears likely that the River House will return to a residential function.

Central to the original selection of the site and the building's design response is its landscape environment. The introduced, deciduous species within the landscape not only form an important part of attenuating climate extremes—affording sunlight in winter and shade in summer—but also played an important visual role in how the house alternately blends and contrasts with its landscape. Norman Day (2020) has described the site as having a 'theatrical scope, even cinematic', and to extend this metaphor the deciduous foliage forms a stage curtain, completely obscuring the house in summer only to reveal it each autumn and winter. As noted in McCartney (2007: 68), this led to some unexpected attention. 'Finished in December [1955] when the foliage protected the house, it was a different story come autumn. Suddenly it was exposed and highly visible from the tram that passed over Victoria Bridge. People would rush to the tram windows to speculate on what sort of building it was'. Dione McIntyre (Pers. Comm.) confirmed that this attention played a large role in the McIntyre's decision to alter the colour scheme.

Earthworks in the 1950s enabled driveway access to the site, and subsequent landscaping followed. The River House stood for many years without surrounding built form, but in recent years it has been joined by a complex of buildings dispersed across the broader site housing accommodation and workspaces for the extended McIntyre

family, friends and associates. While Peter McIntyre's fondness for the landscape was a major part of the site selection, in the mid-20th century this section of the river was dominated by industrial and horticultural uses on its western bank, with the River House looking over the Carbon Dry Ice Factory and, presumably below the flood line, Chinese market gardens. The river itself was far from pristine, with both liquid and rubbish pollution. The site itself featured a stand of weeping willows which was later removed by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. Today's river landscape on and in the vicinity of the site can thus be seen largely as part of the site landscaping and development during the McIntyre era, and a result of Melbourne's turn to the river for recreation and amenity—a trend this site anticipated by some 40 years.

Description & Integrity

The multi-level house is supported on a central steel tower rising from a 14 foot (4.27m) square concrete plinth, from which is cantilevered a steel A-frame comprising two triangular steel frames each cantilevered 40 feet (12.19m). The walls are set within this framework leaving the structure exposed, and infilled with compressed strawboard panels (a product known as Solomit). At the outer extent of the frame the walls give way to open decks. Originally externally painted tomato red and cadmium yellow in a Mondrian-inspired colour scheme devised by Dione McIntyre, the house was externally reclad in hardwood and deliberately repainted in a more inconspicuous shade of Brunswick green tinted with creosote in the 1960s (McCartney: 70).

The house was originally accessed from the ground level via a door that slides up, which remains in situ in its open position, with the entry now served by a conventionally hinged door. A further entry at level is provided via a gantry to the dining room on the mid-level. A central spiral staircase provides access between the levels, with fenestration providing glimpses of the tree canopies with which the house draws level, and the Yarra River/*Birrarung* below which gives it its name. Internal walls retain their original or early finishes and evidence of the original colour scheme, with the kitchen remaining intact.

The extensive, picturesque site on which the house was built is outstanding and it gives a freedom to the architectural form that would not have been possible on most suburban allotments. As noted above (see 'History') the site has undergone landscaping improvement works over the past half-century, and today stands as a combination of remnant endemic, introduced native and introduced species. A number of trees considered integral to the landscape values to which the house responds are recommended for heritage tree controls (see 'Grading and Recommendations' below). Outbuildings and ancillary structures include a landing and adjoining boat jetty.

A ground level annex, also designed by Peter McIntyre, was built in the 1960s beneath the western wing. Aside from those mentioned above, there have been a series of internal and external alterations, additions and accretions over the life of the building, including enclosure of the open decking (1958; since reversed) and a reduction in the size of skylights (McCartney, 2007: 68). Many of these were in response to understanding and adapting to environmental conditions at the site and the needs of a growing family. Rather than being detrimental to the integrity of the building, such changes over time demonstrates the flexibility afforded by its radical structural design and construction, and indeed are reversible. Today the house demonstrates a high degree of integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Within the Boroondara study area, the River House can be compared with a number of other radical and influential post-war modernist residences. McIntyre's own first residential commission, 'Stargazer House', 2 Taurus Street, North Balwyn (1952-3; Boroondara HO188; Hermes ID 14939) is considered of architectural merit of potentially state significance. Like River House, Stargazer House was an experiment in tensioned

and cantilevered built form, supported by prominently expressed cables, enabling upstairs rooms to be tilted to provide the views to the sky that gave the house its name. It is further considered of local significance for its high degree of integrity and single occupant status, enabling it to exemplify 'typical lifestyles emanating from the experiments with living undertaken by some after the war' (Citation, Hermes ID 14939).

McIntyre's mentor and nationally prominent modernist architect and critic Robin Boyd was also active in Boroondara, with works including his own house at 664-666 Riversdale Road Camberwell, and Pettigrew House (both 1945); (with), Redmond Street Kew (1946, with Pethebridge); and Grounds Romburg and Boyd's work in Studley Park for Wilson, Haughton-James, Cowen, Clemson, Date, Lawrence and Purves families (Built Heritage Pty Ltd 2012: 228-230). Of these, Boyd's own house at 664-666 Riversdale Road, Camberwell (1945; HO116; H0879; Hermes IDs 191, 14952) is the most appropriate comparative example, having been assessed for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register as having state significance as the 'prototype of the post war modern Victorian house'. The house was subject to an extensive comparative analysis in its 2001 Conservation Management Plan (CMP) (prepared by RBA Architects and Conservation Consultants Pty Ltd) which confirmed its state-level of significance including consideration within Boyd's oeuvre. The assessment included in the CMP considers the place to have a high degree of integrity overall, but denotes a 1975 addition as being intrusive. Relevantly, it is significant (at state level) for its association with post-war modernist architecture, as a fine and highly intact example demonstrating innovative and experimental design, as one of the earliest known examples of modernist architecture in Victoria, for its technical significance and demonstration of creative achievement connected with its design including open plan living, multi-functional rooms, integrated joinery and response to site that were considered revolutionary but now are commonplace, and for its association with Robin Boyd.

Having regard to the above comparative examples, the River House can be assessed as having at least similar or potentially even greater merit for recognition of its significance. While it is later than both examples, it represents a far more distinct and radical break from pre-modernist residential housing possibilities than either 'Stargazer' or Boyd's own house. Arguably, compared with Boyd's house it presented such a unique solution to a unique site that its practical influence on construction on more typical residential suburban allotments was more limited. However within McIntyre's work, it is the fulfillment of engineering experimentation with counterbalancing forces that was tentatively advanced in 'Stargazer'. It is a parsimonious and yet sensitive and aesthetically resolved engineering response, in such a challenging site context that only such a response could enable a building—none could otherwise be feasible.

A comparative assessment reveals that the place clearly meets the threshold for local heritage significance and has strong likelihood to meet the threshold for state significance.

Curtilage Map



Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Planning and Community Development, August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

The River House is important to the City of Boroondara's cultural history as an early, well known and radical exemplar of the influence and development of architectural modernism in the post-war period. Emerging from a period of austerity associated with World War Two, the River House represented a distinctive departure from conservatism and stylistic restraint. The River House also anticipated—by nearly half-a-century—contemporary approaches to development on the *Birrarung*/Yarra River that emphasise its landscape amenity.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

The place does not meet this criterion. While it represents a unique response to site, it is among a number of post-war architects' own homes in the municipality and indeed this part of Kew to demonstrate innovative design responses, many of which are included in the heritage overlay.

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

The place does not meet this criterion.

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

The place does not meet this criterion. While closely identified with architectural modernism in the post-war era, River House is radically unique in its response to site and its constituent elements. As such, its representativeness of this class of place is limited to less tangible factors such as innovation and experimentation rather than particular attributes capable of being described as principal characteristics.

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

Replete with comparisons to a Paul Klee butterfly, the distinctive form, finish and siting of the River House has evoked strong aesthetic responses in the architectural and broader community. The structural form literally embodies a tension between forces, enabling the majority of the building to appear incongruously suspended against a lush and steep riverside landscape. Its aesthetic effect incorporates theatricality through being revealed and hidden in turn by a curtain of deciduous foliage, within and against a backdrop of endemic and introduced vegetation. Its use of strong geometrical elements, particularly triangles, is a leitmotif that emblematises the building at each level of scale, from its overall structural form down to its constituent elements, and most notably its fenestration.

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

The River House demonstrates a very high degree of creative and technical achievement through its structural innovation that enabled an otherwise unusable site to accommodate a family home. The structural system designed in conjunction with advice from engineer Bill Irwin harnesses a counterbalancing of forces via an A-frame double cantilevered truss, enabling it to be physically possible to build on a sharply constrained site. This structural system for River House was in development prior to, and in fact influenced, the structural system for the 1956 Olympic Pool which was a critical part of the winning competition design, enabling the Olympic Pool design to use 1/3 of the steel than would otherwise be the case.

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

The place does not meet this criterion.

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

The River House is synonymous with the early careers of Peter and Dione McIntyre, whose work individually, in collaboration and as part of the McIntyre Partnership has resulted in influential and award-winning architecture within the municipality and throughout Victoria. Among other prizes and awards, River House won the 2014 Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Architecture Award for 'best enduring architecture'.

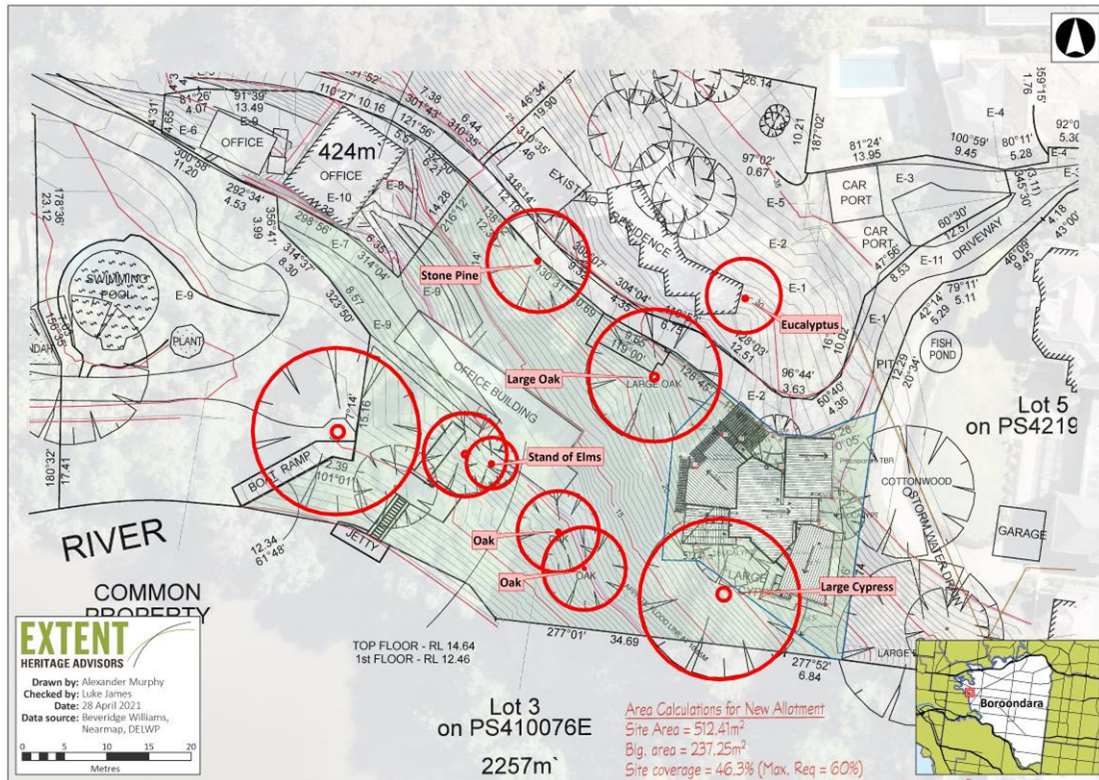
Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The house at 2 Hodgson Street Kew (River House) is significant to the City of Boroondara. Its original or early interior elements, and its external (original and 1960s) and original internal colour scheme are significant, as is the landscape setting, particularly the trees that provide the backdrop and deciduous screen to the River House including the stand of elms and oaks between the building and the river, the large cypress to its south east, the large oak to its north east and the stone pine to its north (see Tree control map below). Also significant is the boat jetty, the landing structure, and original or early hard landscaping elements including the sandstone steps to the river.

Features that do not contribute to the significance of this place include non-original or early alterations, and the 1960s annex, which although also designed by Peter McIntyre, was a pragmatic response to accommodate family needs. While it is not an intrusive element, its removal would clarify the structural expression of the eastern cantilever.

Tree control map¹



How is it significant?

River House is of local historical, aesthetic, technical and associative significance to the City of Boroondara.

¹ Map incorporates data from Beverage Williams and Co Pty Ltd '2 Hodgson Street and 25 Swinton Avenue Kew, Plan of Existing Conditions' dated 4 May 2007; Nearmap aerial imagery (2021) and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Why is it significant?

The River House is important to the City of Boroondara’s cultural history as an early, well known and radical exemplar of the influence and development of architectural modernism in the post-war period. Emerging from a period of austerity associated with World War Two, the River House represented a distinctive departure from conservatism and stylistic restraint. The River House also anticipated—by nearly half-a-century—contemporary approaches to development on the *Birrarung/Yarra* river that emphasise its landscape amenity. (Criterion A)

Replete with comparisons to a Paul Klee butterfly, the distinctive form, finish and siting of the River House has evoked strong aesthetic responses in the architectural and broader community. The structural form literally embodies a tension between forces, enabling the majority of the building to appear incongruously suspended against a lush and steep riverside landscape. Its aesthetic effect incorporates theatricality through being revealed and hidden in turn by a curtain of deciduous foliage, within and against a backdrop of endemic and introduced vegetation. Its use of strong geometrical elements, particularly triangles, is a leitmotif that emblematises the building at each level of scale, from its overall structural form down to its constituent elements, and most notably its fenestration. (Criterion E)

The River House demonstrates a very high degree of creative and technical achievement through its structural innovation that enabled an otherwise unusable site to accommodate a family home. The structural system designed in conjunction with advice from engineer Bill Irwin harnesses a counterbalancing of forces via an A-frame double cantilevered truss, enabling it to be physically possible to build on a sharply constrained site. This structural system for River House was in development prior to, and in fact influenced, the structural system for the 1956 Olympic Pool which was a critical part of the winning competition design, enabling the Olympic Pool design to use 1/3 of the steel than would otherwise be the case. (Criterion F)

The River House is synonymous with the early careers of Peter and Dione McIntyre, whose work individually, in collaboration and as part of the McIntyre Partnership has resulted in influential and award-winning architecture within the municipality and throughout Victoria. Among other prizes and awards, River House won the 2014 Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Architecture Award for ‘best enduring architecture’. (Criterion H)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External Paint Colours <i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls <i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	Yes
Tree Controls <i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	Yes - Oak trees (x3), Cypress tree, Stone Pine, Stand of Elms
Victorian Heritage Register <i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No

Incorporated Plan <i>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</i>	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions <i>Are there outbuildings and fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	Yes, jetty and landing
Prohibited uses may be permitted <i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	Yes
Aboriginal Heritage Place <i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No

Identified By

Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, City of Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988.

References

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National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Statement of Significance, Hermes No. 64915, [1990] 1998.

Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, City of Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988.

Site visit and interviews with Peter and Dione McIntyre, 18 March 2021, and subsequent email correspondence.

Photographs



Figure 2. Interior showing kitchen and dining area



Figure 3. Interior showing dining area



Figure 4. Spiral staircase. Note original front door in 'open' position against wall.



Figure 5. Interior, upper level.



Figure 6. Interior, lower level.



Figure 7. View of approach to River House from jetty, showing stone stairs.



Figure 8. Concrete plinth.



Figure 9. Cantilevered balcony.