HO89 – Monleisha, 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee

Heritage Place: Monleisha	**HO Reference:** HO89 **Date updated:** 15 October 2026
Address: 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee	



Figure 1. Monleisha, 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee. Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

Item Group: Residential buildings (private) **Item Type:** House	**Key Theme:** Housing the population **Key Sub-theme:** Interwar housing
Designer: Arthur Pretty (architect) **Builder:** Unknown	**Construction:** 1940 **Style:** Interwar – Streamline moderne
Significance Level: Local	
Recommendation: Retain local controls. Retain tree controls. Retain solar energy controls. Apply fence and outbuilding controls. Update place name.	

Controls:	○	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	●	Tree controls (himalayan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*),

						sugar gum (*Eucalyptus Cladocalyx*), mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens var. sempervirens*), mexican weeping pine (*Pinus patula*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) and weeping pink rosebud cherry (*Prunus subhirtella pendula rosea*))
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	●	Outbuildings and fence not exempt (original brick fence, pool and surrounds and aviary remnants)
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage



Figure 2. Monleisha, 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	Monleisha is of historical significance as a twentieth century mansion which is demonstrative of the wealth of the Carter family, established poultry farmers in Werribee. The Carters had begun a small poultry farm that grew to be highly successful over the twentieth century and generated great wealth and prosperity. As a result, the Carters commissioned and constructed two large mansions in Werribee in the Interwar period: Monleisha and Shirwal Court (HO32). The Carters were influential in the poultry farming business which was a key industry for the region.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	Monleisha is significant as a rare, intact example of the domestic use of Streamline Moderne architecture. While this style was commonplace in the Interwar period, its use for residential works is typically limited to flats and it is uncommon in large established dwellings. The style was reflective of the post-depression era seeking designs which stripped back the detailing that was typical of architecture prior to the Interwar period.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	Monleisha is of representative significance as an example of modernist residential architecture that developed following the depression era. The design of the dwelling is characteristic of Streamline Moderne architecture and is a fine example of the application of this style in a residential context.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	Monleisha is of aesthetic significance for its exemplar use of the Streamline Moderne style expressed through the curving forms, long horizontal elements and its construction of cream brick with contrasting brown brick. The large expanses of glazing with steel framed windows, including some curved windows and etched windows, are characteristic of this style. The architecture is supported by

		a series of outbuildings that are of the same construction date and in the same style, including the swimming pool and aviary, and the collection of trees which were planted at the time of construction which provide a green backdrop for the dwelling.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this 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 the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	The place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	Monleisha is of significance for its associations with Roland Carter, the Carter family and Arthur Pretty. Roland Carter was a well-known Werribee entrepreneur in the poultry business, established with his brothers, who were known in the district and Australia-wide for their poultry farms. Arthur Pretty was a Victorian architect notable for his residential work. Pretty studied at Swinburne Technical College in architecture and building, before embarking on experience as a draftsman. After 1926, he transferred to the Public Works Department and studied at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier. He completed a Diploma of Architectural Design in 1930 before opening his own office. His design of Monleisha was a notable success of his architectural career, as well as 'Shirwal Court' (HO32), another nearby Werribee residence designed for Walter Carter, the brother of Roland Carter.

Statement of Significance – Monleisha, 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee

Address: 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee	**PS ref no:** HO89



Figure 3. 'Monleisha' at 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

What is significant?

Monleisha, including surrounding landscaping, mature trees surrounding the property including himalayan cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*), sugar gum (*Eucalyptus Cladocalyx*), mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens var. sempervirens*), Mexican weeping pine (*Pinus patula*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) and weeping pink rosebud cherry (*Prunus subhirtella pendula rosea*), bricked fence, rear pool area and associated infrastructure, and aviary remnants, is significant.

New enclosures to the south-west of the dwelling and new metal gates and associated fencing elements to the three entrances to the property (entrance from Russell Street, Corner entrance, and entrance from Loch Avenue are not significant.

How is it significant?

Monleisha is of historical, representative, aesthetic and associative significance to the City of Wyndham. Monleisha is also of significance for its rare use of Streamline Moderne architecture in a residential dwelling.

Why is it significant?

Monleisha is of historical significance as a twentieth century mansion which is demonstrative of the wealth of the Carter family, established poultry farmers in Werribee. The Carters had begun a small poultry farm that grew to be highly successful over the twentieth century and generated great wealth and prosperity. As a result, the Carters commissioned and constructed two large mansions in Werribee in the Interwar period: Monleisha and Shirwal Court (HO32). The Carters were influential in the poultry farming business which was a key industry for the region. (Criterion A).

Monleisha is significant as a rare, intact example of the domestic use of Streamline Moderne architecture. While this style was commonplace in the Interwar period, its use for residential works is typically limited to flats and it is uncommon in large established dwellings. The style was reflective of the post-depression era seeking designs which stripped back the detailing that was typical of architecture prior to the Interwar period. (Criterion B).

Monleisha is of representative significance as an example of modernist residential architecture that developed following the depression era. The design of the dwelling is characteristic of Streamline Moderne architecture and is a fine example of the application of this style in a residential context. (Criterion D).

Monleisha is of aesthetic significance for its exemplar use of the Streamline Moderne style expressed through the curving forms, long horizontal elements and its construction of cream brick with contrasting brown brick. The large expanses of glazing with steel framed windows, including some curved windows and etched windows, are characteristic of this style. The architecture is supported by a series of outbuildings that are of the same construction date and in the same style, including the swimming pool and aviary, and the collection of trees which were planted at the time of construction which provide a green backdrop for the dwelling. (Criterion E).

Monleisha is of significance for its associations with Roland Carter, the Carter family and Arthur Pretty. Roland Carter was a well-known Werribee entrepreneur in the poultry business, established with his brothers, who were known in the district and Australia-wide for their poultry farms. (Criterion H).

Arthur Pretty was a Victorian architect notable for his residential work. Pretty studied at Swinburne Technical College in architecture and building, before embarking on experience as a draftsman. After 1926, he transferred to the Public Works Department and studied at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier. He completed a Diploma of Architectural Design in 1930 before opening his own office. His design of Monleisha was a notable success of his architectural career, as well as ‘Shirwal Court’ (HO32), another nearby Werribee residence designed for Walter Carter, the brother of Roland Carter. (Criterion H).

Primary Source

Monleisha citation, Extent Heritage, 2026.

Description

Bunurong Country

Monleisha is located on the traditional lands of the Bunurong peoples. They have cared for this Country for thousands of years and continue to care for Country today. The wider landscape is shaped by the flowing waters of Wirribi Yaluk (Werribee River), exceptional and increasingly endangered plains grasslands, ancient volcanic lava flows and the considerable shorelines of Naarm (Port Phillip Bay)(BLCAC, 2026, 10).

Bunurong Country is vast, complex and interconnected. It encompasses the lands on which we live on and the plants and animals it sustains; the Sky Country above which is home to birds and insects and night-time constellations; and the Sea Country, which provides so many of the resources that allow Country to thrive (BLCAC, 2026, 10).

Physical Analysis

The dwelling at 51-59 Russell Street is a grand house constructed in the Interwar period and designed in a Streamline Moderne style. The dwelling is centrally sited on a corner lot facing the intersection of Russell Street and Lock Avenue and oriented to the northeast corner. The dwelling is surrounded by significant landscaping, including mature trees of varied species and established plantings, which largely obscure it from view from the public domain. The dwelling presents as a notable three-storey, face cream brick structure, composed of stacked and overlapping geometric shapes including rounded sections.

Monleisha incorporates features of the Streamline Moderne style, including strong horizontal lines with curved elements rising above the front porch and above the cantilevered first floor balcony. It has a flat roof form with parapet walls and is composed of numerous adjacent geometric forms. The warm cream brick walls contrast with deep brown, slim brick detailing. It features expanses of glazing including vertical and horizontal windows, multi-paned steel framed windows (some of which are curved); steel and timber framed glazed doors and double doors with glazing etched with a forest scene. The porches feature a deep brown, slim brick balustrade; deep brown floor tiles and steel posts painted white. The front porch features a glass brick feature wall. The dark stained timber front door with glass side panels is screened by a wide set of security doors comprised of highly articulated, curved wrought iron details, painted black. Accessed via a long, curving driveway, the warm cream brick garage has a curved façade, with a corresponding curved metal garage door, painted pale cream. The two front boundaries are enclosed by a low, cream brick fence, with curved elements at the entrance and contrasting deep brown brick detailing. A clipped hedge sits behind the low brick fence, providing privacy. A set of tall, wrought iron Streamline Moderne style entrance gates (painted black) feature at the driveway entrance.

Beyond the house itself, the property incorporates an in-ground swimming pool, also designed in the Streamline Modern style, featuring contrasting pale cream and pale blue tiles and adjacent concrete terraces which are surrounded by clipped hedges. Outdoor pavilions/aviaries with conical roof forms adjacent to the swimming pool are screened by a tall, warm cream brick fence. The house and swimming pool are set within a well maintained mature garden setting, including the following mature trees:

- Himalayan Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*)
- Sugar Gum (*Eucalyptus Cladocalyx*)
- Mediterranean Cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens var. sempervirens*)
- Mexican Weeping Pine (*Pinus patula*)
- Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*)
- Weeping Pink Rosebud Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella pendula rosea*)

Alterations and Additions

- Based on fieldwork undertaken and available material, the house appears to be almost entirely intact, with minimal (or no) alterations or additions to the house, garage, swimming pool and associated outbuilding.
- Minor alterations to the rear aviary reducing overall extent, undertaken in c. 1980s.
- New enclosures to the south-west of the dwelling*
- Addition and replacement of metal gates and fencing elements to the three entrances to the property (entrance from Russell Street, Corner entrance, and entrance from Loch Avenue).*

Whilst the swimming pool is in need of some repairs, the house and outbuildings are in good condition, and they are of high integrity overall. The surrounding garden is well maintained and provides a well-landscaped, mature garden setting for the house, swimming pool and outbuildings.

The house is of high integrity and in good condition.

**** Denotes element that does not contribute to the cultural significance of the place.***

History

Monleisha, located at 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee, is situated on the lands of the Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of Country. Despite the effects of colonisation, including dispossession of land, the Traditional Custodians have maintained a continuing connection to land, waters and culture within the City of Wyndham.

Werribee was positioned in proximity to a ford over Werribee River, also known by its traditional name Wirribi Yaluk, connecting the route between Melbourne and Geelong (Murray 1974, 11; Lovell Chen 2024, 51). As traffic grew along the Melbourne to Geelong route, the Werribee settlement expanded. In 1849, land was reserved for a township and was gazetted as 'Wyndham' in 1850, commencing sale of Crown Land shortly after (James and Pritchard 2008, 15; Hocking 2013, 177; Murray 1974, 14).

The arrival of the railway in 1857 firmly positioned the commercial centre on the east side of the river. A post office, churches, schools and additional inns soon followed (James and Pritchard 2008, 103). While the township itself changed little throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the surrounding land prospered economically under sheep and cattle grazing (Werribee Shire Banner 29 July 1937, 3).

Closer Settlement of the 1890s through until the 1930s marked a turning point, where large estates were subdivided for cropping and other industries, driving an increase in population and transforming land use (Lovell Chen 2024, 15; James and Pritchard 2008, 49; Penrose 2001, 9).

Place History

The land on which Monleisha would later be constructed was originally part of Allotment 16 of Section 15 in the Parish of Deutgam. This land was purchased by Thomas Chirnside in the 1850s Crown land sales, consolidating it into his estate that spanned much of southern Wyndham (Figure 4). The Chirnsides, who began occupying land in Wyndham from 1851, came to dominate the region, eventually owning over 90,000 acres. They were key civic figures and played a major role in the development of Werribee (Ronald 1978, 36 & 49).

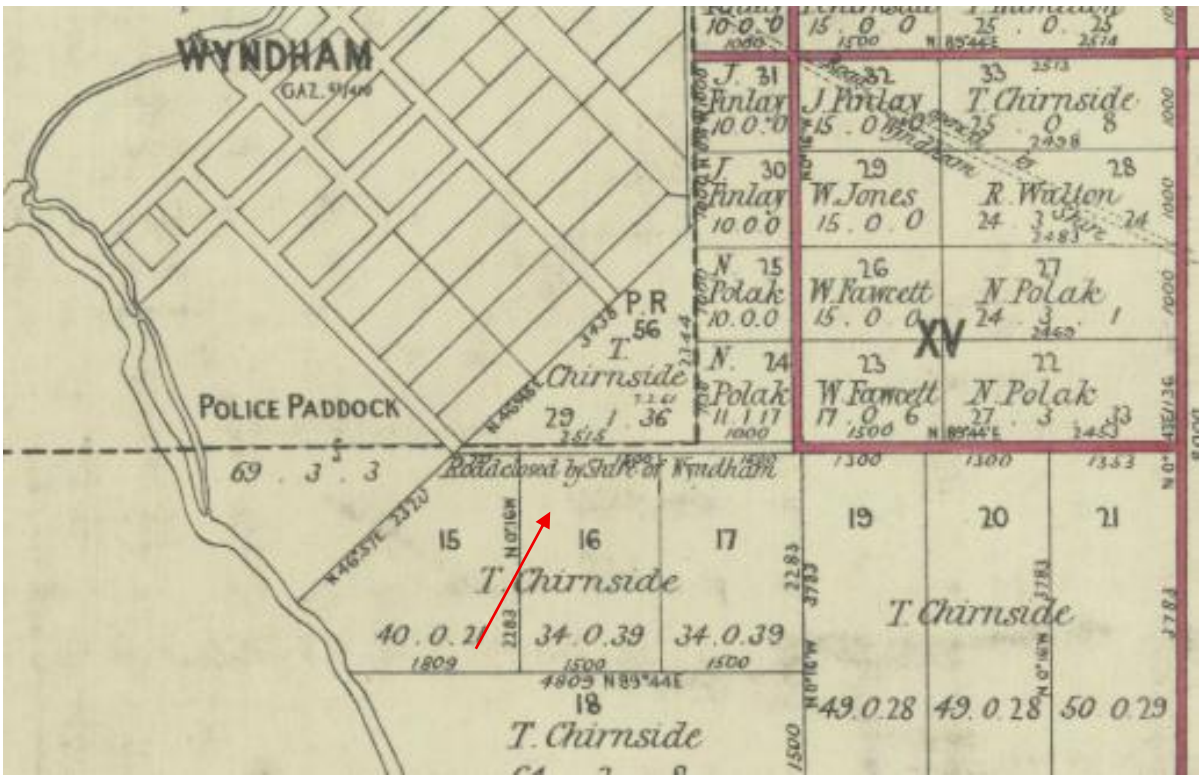


Figure 4. Extract from 1880 Parish Plan, prior to the southern subdivision of Wyndham Township (Werribee). Later location of Monleisha indicated by red arrow. *Source:* Department of Crown Lands and Survey. 1880. 'Deutgam.' Public Record Office Victoria (Web-based archive). https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/A6EDA490-F843-11E9-AE98-13F3897B06A2/content?image=1

Construction and Ownership by the Carter Family

In 1939 it was reported that Roland Carter, the youngest son of Mr and Mrs James Carter of Werribee (with his brothers) had what was said to be the largest poultry farm in Australia (The Australian Women's Weekly 1939, 4). Roland Carter married Eunice May Stewart in a specially chartered plane flying above Essendon Airport in 1939, at which time it was reported that 'Mr and Mrs Rowland Carter are building a spacious modern home at Werribee, not far from the poultry farm' (The Australian Women's Weekly 1939, 4).

Roland Carter had purchased the property on the corner of Loch Avenue and Russell Street in the late 1930s (Figure 5), and with the completion of the new house in 1940, the value of the property soared from 28 pounds to 250 pounds (Context Pty Ltd, 1997, 308). The dwelling at 51-59 Russell Street, Werribee was designed in 1940 by architect Arthur Pretty for Roland (also known as Rowland) Carter (Built Heritage Pty Ltd). It is one of three substantial architect-designed residences constructed from the late 1930s for the members of the Carter family, successful Werribee poultry farmers. During the 1930s, Jack Carter opened a large new poultry farm complex in Loch Avenue (to the south of Monleisha) (Context Pty Ltd, 308). Two years earlier, in 1938, Walter Carter's new residence, Shirwal Court (HO32), was built on the corner of Deutgam and Greaves Streets. Shirwal Court (HO32) was designed in the by the same architect, Arthur Pretty (Context Pty Ltd 1997, 308).

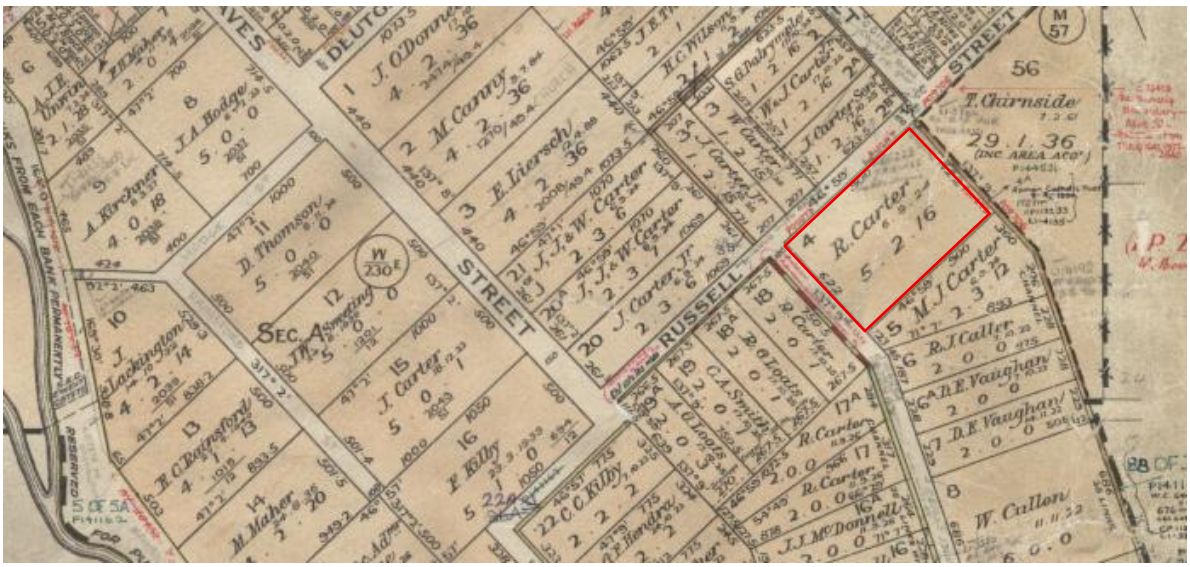


Figure 5. Extract from c.1954 Parish Plan showing 51-59 Russell Street, indicated in red. *Source:* Department of Lands and Survey. 1954. *Deutgam – 2 Parish Plan.* Digitised cartographic material. Public Record Office Victoria (online database). https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/06B4EA92-F442-11EA-BE8C-890B1FA715B8



Figure 6. Early photograph of Monleisha c.1940s. The image shows the dwellings pedestrian entrance and front façade. *Source:* Courtesy of the Carter family (private collection), 2025.



Figure 7. Extract from 1949 aerial photograph of Werribee looking northwest. The image shows Monleisha and its surrounding landscaping, including pool and substantial aviary at the rear. *Source:* Pratt, Charles. 1949. *Aerial view of Carters Egg Farm, Werribee*. Digitised photograph. Airspy collection: photographs. State Library Victoria. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/300844

In 1975 the property was described in its advertisement for sale (Werribee Banner Newspaper 1975, 8). The advertisement described the property as follows:

> *A slice of the history of Werribee went under the hammer on 04 Jun 1975, and ended a family tradition that commenced 35 years earlier when the home was built. It is a 14-roomed home of mansion proportions and occupies a total area of 80 squares. As one enters its opulent entrance foyer, one is confronted by a grand ballroom fitted to the last detail and including an hydraulic lifting orchestra stand. On one side of the ballroom is a large lounge room, on the other a spacious well lit dining room, and at the rear a large sprawling patio. A sitting room, office, ladies and gentlemen's rest rooms, ample storage areas, access to double garage, large well fitted kitchen and service kitchen, dinette, self contained staff quarters and accessible service areas occupy the balance of the ground floor .An imposing curved staircase ascends to the first floor landing from which 4 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, 2 toilet suites and a number of sunlit balconies are located. A spiral staircase ascends to the second floor at which is located a large billiard room (a gentlemen's retreat, also with balcony access) and yet another staircase to further balconies above it. The home was built by the late Mr Rowland Carter and Mrs Carter. Mrs Carter, her daughter and family still reside in the property and are well known to Werribee residents. The home is set in 4 acres of rambling grounds and is to be offered with outbuildings of a very large aviary complex, and swimming pool which was originally excavated by the late Mr Carter with the aid of a shovel and rotary hoe.*

Arthur Pretty, architect

After working at the Public Works Department whilst completing his architectural studies at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier, Arthur E Pretty opened his own office in 1931 (Built Heritage Pty Ltd). Pretty's early residential work in Melbourne's outer-eastern fringe was typically modest gable roofed timber cottages with posted verandahs, casement windows and

other picturesque elements (Built Heritage Pty Ltd). After moving his practice to Collins Street in Melbourne, he abandoned his cottage style and embraced the more progressive Moderne style, exemplified by the two large flat roofed brick houses that he designed for the prominent Carter family in Werribee, Shirwal Court (HO32) and Monleisha (HO89) (Built Heritage Pty Ltd).

Garden context and setting

The Monleisha grounds included a formal circular driveway that led to the main entry of the house, border plantings, trees, open grassed areas. as well as a large swimming pool and fifteen aviary structures, each built as a conical hut (Lovell Chen 2024, 100). By 1984, the majority of the aviary structures had been demolished (Figure 8). Whilst the aviary has been significantly reduced in scale, there are remnants of the early structure. The landscaping has also significantly developed with now large mature trees surrounding the building.

The mature garden setting includes the following trees (which are included in the National Trust of Australia 'Significant Tree Register'):

- **Himalayan Cypress** (*Cupressus torulosa*); This pair of Cypress trees planted on either side of the east driveway entrance to the property (Lock Avenue boundary)
- **Sugar Gum** (*Eucalyptus Cladocalyx*): located in the south-west corner of the garden, The tree was planted circa 1941 to the south of the residence creating a broad green backdrop for the residence
- **Mediterranean Cypress** (*Cupressus sempervirens var. sempervirens*: These two Mediterranean Cypress trees close planting on the east wall of the residence
- **Mexican Weeping Pine** (*Pinus patula*):
- **Pin Oak** (*Quercus palustris*) : located on the north-west side of the house, the Pin Oak tree was planted by Ms Charmaine Wakefield in 1970,
- **Weeping Pink Rosebud Cherry** (*Prunus subhirtella pendula rosea*): located on the north-east side of the house and garden



Figure 8. Aerial view of Monleisha in 1984. Cleared area formerly housing the aviary depicted. *Source:* Landata. 1984. Digitised Image. https://www.landata.vic.gov.au/tpc_from_landataonline.aspx

Comparative Analysis

Monleisha is one of a limited number of examples of intact substantial mansions constructed in the Interwar period in Werribee. This was a time of expansion in Werribee but also saw the wealth of the Carter family grow significantly which was reflected in both the construction of Monleisha and Shirwal Court. Other residents of Werribee who had generated wealth through the agricultural industry were also noted as having constructed more substantial dwellings at this time. Monleisha is comparable to the following places:

Shirwal Court (HO32)

Monleisha is comparable to Shirwal Court, Werribee as an example of Arthur Pretty's work and is demonstrative of the wealth amassed by the Carter family during the Interwar period. Both Shirwal Court and Monleisha were designed in the Streamline Moderne style that was not typical to the region. While both properties are intact examples from the Interwar period, Monleisha stands out as a highly intact example which, when compared to Shirwal Court, has undergone minimal alterations retaining all of its outbuildings and associated landscaping.

Muswell (HO97)

Monleisha is comparable to Muswell, Werribee as a relatively intact Interwar dwelling within Werribee. While Muswell is located on a comparatively small town allotment and designed in the Spanish Mission style, it similarly features a strong architectural expression that was not typical of residential development within Werribee. Monleisha can though be differentiated as a rare example of a grand house in the area and a superb demonstration of the Streamline Moderne style which was becoming prominent in the Interwar period.

Sumiya (HO101)

Monleisha is comparable to Sumiya, as an example of modernist residential architecture within the municipality. Whilst Sumiya is of a later construction and of a more standard residential scale, the two houses share similar characteristics including their modernist style with simplistic cream brick walling and flat roof form. Monleisha has a more horizontal emphasis compared to Sumiya's detailing with bricked vertical elements, however both highlight a modernist approach for clean geometric form and lines. Despite their differences in era and scale, they both clearly display modernist design which is a distinct and unusual style for residences within Werribee.

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Images



Figure 9. The northeast corner of the property facing the intersection of Russell Street and Lock Avenue, including corner gates. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 10. Detail view of corner gates. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

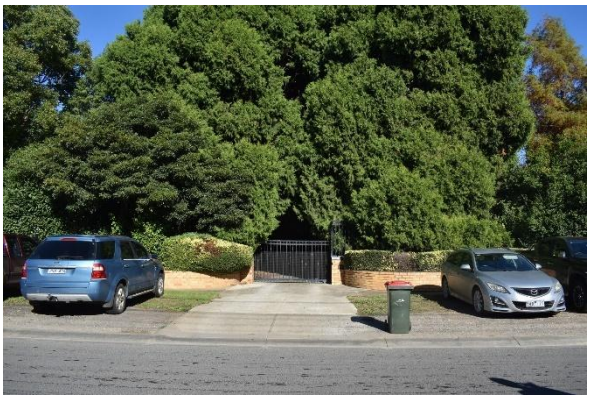


Figure 11. Private vehicle entrance from Lock Avenue. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 12. East elevation facing driveway and Lock Avenue. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 13. Front façade entry verandah, looking southwest. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

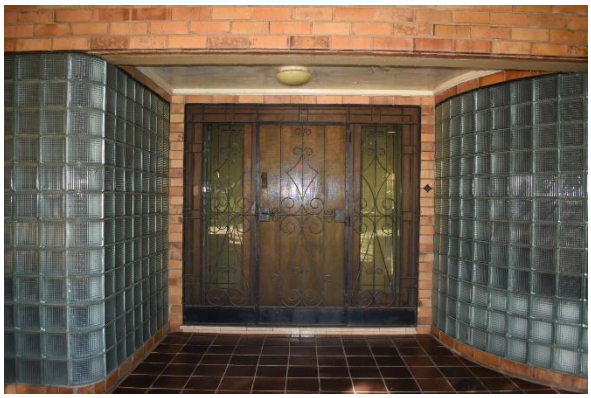


Figure 14. Detail view of front doorway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Detail view of front entrance, verandah and level one. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



View of the front façade, looking southeast from driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Overview of east elevation including garage, looking southwest from driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Overview of rear veradah to the south elevation. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.

	
Pool and pool structure to the rear of the property. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.	Overview of the northern extent of the early aviary, looking south from the driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.