HO114 – Silver Birches, 211 Watton Street, Werribee

Heritage Place: Silver Birches	**HO Reference:** HO114 **Date updated:** 15 October 2026

Address: 211 Watton Street, Werribee



Figure 1. Silver Birches, 211 Watton Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd.

Item Group: Residential buildings (private) **Item Type:** House	**Key Theme:** Building Towns and Cities **Key Sub-theme:** Postwar housing
Designer: Unknown **Builder:** Unknown	**Construction:** c.1954 **Style:** Post-War International

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Update schedule to indicate that no external paint controls or internal alteration controls apply. Retain tree controls. Apply fence controls. Retain solar energy controls.

Controls:	○	External paint controls	○	Internal alteration controls	●	Tree controls (boundary planting of

						Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*))
	○	Included on Victorian Heritage Register	○	Incorporated Plans	●	Outbuildings and fence not exempt (front fence and gates)
	○	Prohibited uses may be permitted	○	Aboriginal Heritage Place	●	Solar energy system controls

Curtilage

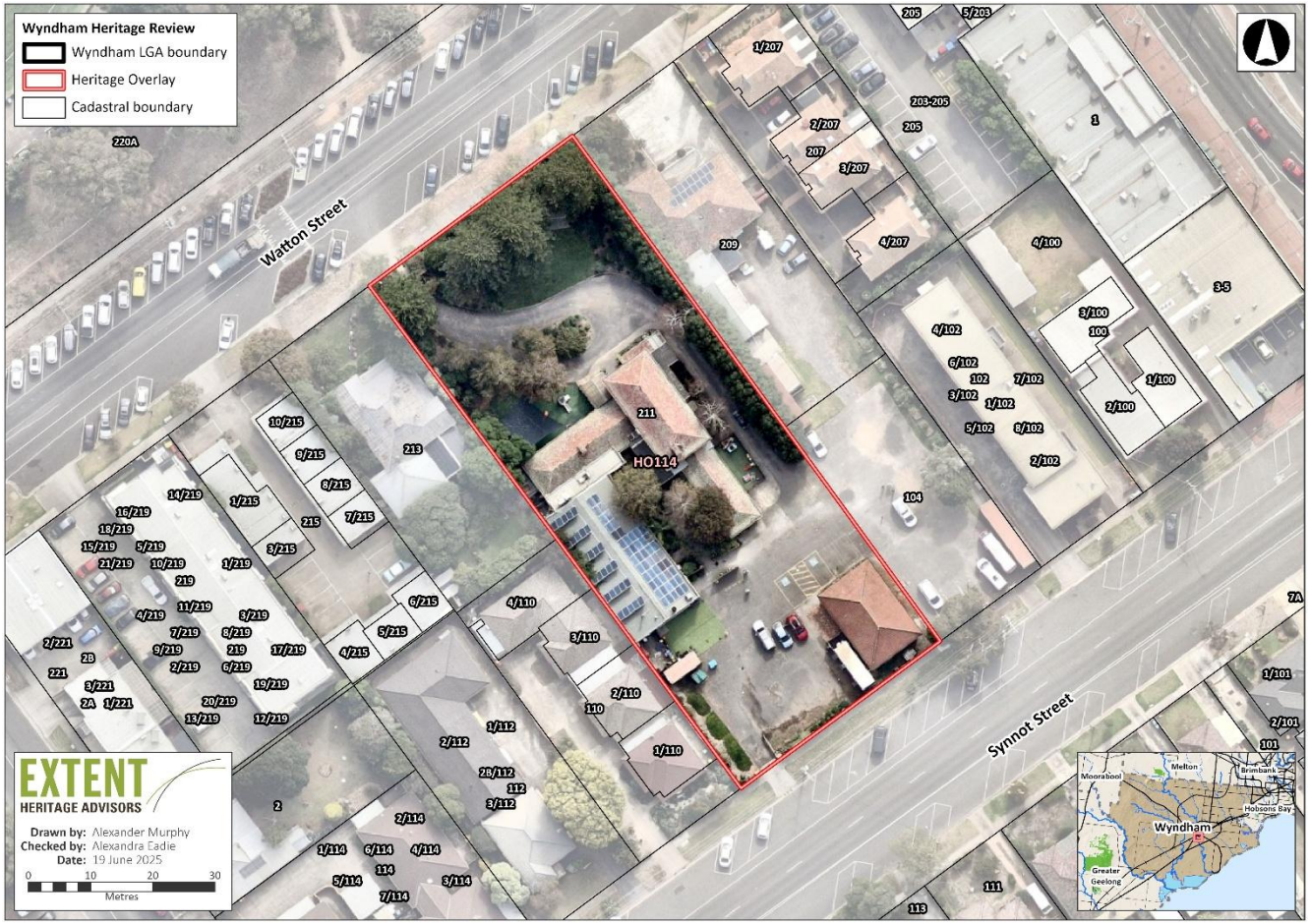


Figure 2. Aerial map showing the curtilage boundary of Silver Birches, 211 Watton Street, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. Spatial data source: VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	Silver Birches is of historical significance as a substantial post-war Modernist residence established during a period of suburban growth and architectural innovation across wider Melbourne, driven by post-World War II economic prosperity and increased population growth. While much of the residential development in Werribee from this era comprised one-storey housing developments designed in the Modernist style, Silver Birches is distinct as a mansion built for Werribee's affluent Carter family, who had commissioned several grand architect-designed homes during the preceding interwar period. As such, the Silver Birches residence not only exemplifies the transition in architectural trends from the interwar period to post-war Modernism, but also underscores how affluent families like the Carters played a significant role in shaping the built environment, commissioning distinctive and architecturally ambitious homes that stood apart from the more modest suburban developments around them.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
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*	The place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	Silver Birches is of aesthetic significance for its demonstration of the Modernist style, which is less well represented in the municipality than other architectural styles. The dwelling is distinguished by its rectilinear form, low flared hipped roof clad in terracotta tiling with wide square boxed eaves, cream face brick, flagstone walled elements, and modern fenestration. The asymmetrical arrangement of the façade and dwelling composition further emphasise this style. The original design

		included an elliptical driveway, boundary planting of Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and an associated fence and gate which contribute to an appreciation of the place as a Modernist design.
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.*	The place does not meet this criterion.

Statement of Significance - Silver Birches, 211 Watton Street, Werribee

Address: 211 Watton Street, Werribee	**PS ref no:** HO114



Figure 3. Silver Birches, 211 Watton Street, Werribee. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd.

What is significant?

The whole of the dwelling including the boundary planting of Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*), front fence and gates and elliptical driveway are significant.

All other plantings and features including alterations to the drive, clearing of the rear garden, the c. 1990s additions including the portico, western hall and secondary structure on the south boundary and contemporary alterations to the front façade including the introduction of sliding doors are not significant.

How is it significant?

Silver Birches is of historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Wyndham.

Why is it significant?

Silver Birches is of historical significance as a substantial post-war Modernist residence established during a period of suburban growth and architectural innovation across wider Melbourne, driven by post-World War II economic prosperity and increased population growth. While much of the residential development in Werribee from this era comprised one-storey housing developments designed in the Modernist style, Silver Birches is distinct as a mansion built for Werribee's affluent Carter family, who had commissioned several grand architect-designed homes during the preceding interwar period. As such, the Silver

Birches residence not only exemplifies the transition in architectural trends from the interwar period to post-war modernism, but also underscores how affluent families like the Carters played a significant role in shaping the built environment, commissioning distinctive and architecturally ambitious homes that stood apart from the more modest suburban developments around them. (Criterion A)

Silver Birches is of aesthetic significance for its demonstration of the Modernist style, which is less well represented in the municipality than other architectural styles. The dwelling is distinguished by its rectilinear form, low flared hipped roof clad in terracotta tiling with wide square boxed eaves, cream face brick, flagstone walled elements, and modern fenestration. The asymmetrical arrangement of the façade and dwelling composition further emphasise this style. The original design included an elliptical driveway, boundary planting of Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) and an associated fence and gate which contribute to an appreciation of the place as a Modernist design. (Criterion E).

Primary Source

Silver Birches citation, Extent Heritage, 2026.

Description

Bunurong Country

Silver Birches 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.

Physical Analysis

The dwelling at 211 Watton Street is a grand post-war house constructed on a large allotment bound by Watton Street to the north and Synnot Street to the south. The dwelling is sited centrally within the property, with a substantial greened front setback including mature Norfolk Island Pines, Silver Birches and a winding driveway. An open gravelled area and secondary structure are located to the rear of the main dwelling. The early dwelling is distinguished by its rectilinear form, low flared hipped roof clad in terracotta tiling with wide square boxed eaves, cream face brick, flagstone walled elements, and modern fenestration. The front of the dwelling addresses Watton Street, set behind a matching cream bricked fence and gate located to the western corner.

The primary façade of the dwelling is composed of an asymmetrical arrangement with a western wing and double storey section with single storey protrusion. It is constructed of cream brick with flagstone walled sections and chimney, as well as a hipped roof with 'upturned' eaves. The elevation includes a contemporary four-panelled glazed sliding door and original, small upper windows to the western extent with stone wall below. The building's front yard features an enclosed artificial grassed courtyard bordered by contemporary metal post fencing.

The primary entrance is located within the western wing, fronted by a later pitched entrance portico (c.1990s) which extends to the driveway and is sympathetically composed of cream brick columns capped with a timber framed roof leading to the front door.

The adjacent two storey section is constructed of cream brick with flared hipped roof and flagstone chimney. The building's north façade has a wide upper storey window and a vertical glazed wall section comprised of multiple panes, spanning from the ground to roof eaves. To the eastern extent is a single storey section which sits proud of the primary double storey frontage with a flagstone clad wall and run of narrow vertical windows separated by single brick mullions and a flat roof. The elevation is partially open to the eastern extent, forming a partial colonnade to a small timber framed patio behind.

The eastern elevation is a continuation of the double storey section, with a further single storey extension to the rear. At the upper level, the dwelling has regular fenestration of seven large double hung sash windows with zig-zag patterned metal Juliet balcony balustrading in front. A door of matching proportions is located towards the rear with an adjoining contemporary metal staircase. The fenestration to the ground floor is large multipaned glazed sections of various sizes, with door access to the side patio in the northernmost section.

The rear extension is comprised of similar materiality with half height upper windows. The extended eaves form a small verandah to the east, supported by simple timber posts with a

paved concrete floor. In front of the east elevation is another artificial grassed courtyard bound by a contemporary metal post fence. This fence extends the full length of the eastern elevation.

To the west of the site is a large contemporary hall with a pitched roof, located behind the primary form. Together with the original "L" shaped dwelling, the extension frames an internal courtyard. This courtyard is composed of hedged garden beds with some mature trees, including birch trees, and flagstone paved footpaths with a central circular fountain, patio and outdoor fireplace. The courtyard wall of the eastern wing is composed of grey painted brick and features two large porthole windows. The broader internal elevations include large expanses of ribbon window glazing.

From the rear carpark, the south elevation of the eastern extension is visible with its flared hipped roof form and single triplet window. Solid walls and gate enclose the courtyard whilst the end of the contemporary hall protrudes into the carpark space, painted grey and without ornamentation or windows.

Broader site landscaping includes a greened front setback with elliptical return asphalted driveway and small pagoda adjacent to the front fence. The northern boundary is lined with large mature Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*), whilst the eastern boundary is lined with smaller evenly placed trees. The driveway extends up the eastern setback to the rear carpark. The carpark is a wide gravelled space primarily accessed from Synnot Street. The rear portion of the eastern fence line has been removed, with the space expanding across to the rear of the neighbouring site. The southeast corner of the property features a modest freestanding addition composed of cream brick with a brown tiled hipped roof. The southern boundary has a timber paling fence with an entrance composed of cream bricked piers and metal gate.

Alterations and Additions

- New landscaping including alterations to roundabout, changes to plantings, clearing of rear for carparking and creation of courtyard.
- c.1990s addition of entrance portico to front façade.*
- c. 1990s addition of western hall.
- c.1990 construction of secondary freestanding structure to the southern boundary.
- Contemporary alterations to the primary façade with the removal of multipaned window and insertion of sliding doors (west of entrance).*
- Implementation of upper level door and metal stair to the east elevation.*
- Removal of original porthole window to the west elevation of eastern wing, for the provision of new doorway.

The dwelling is in good condition and is of high integrity.

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

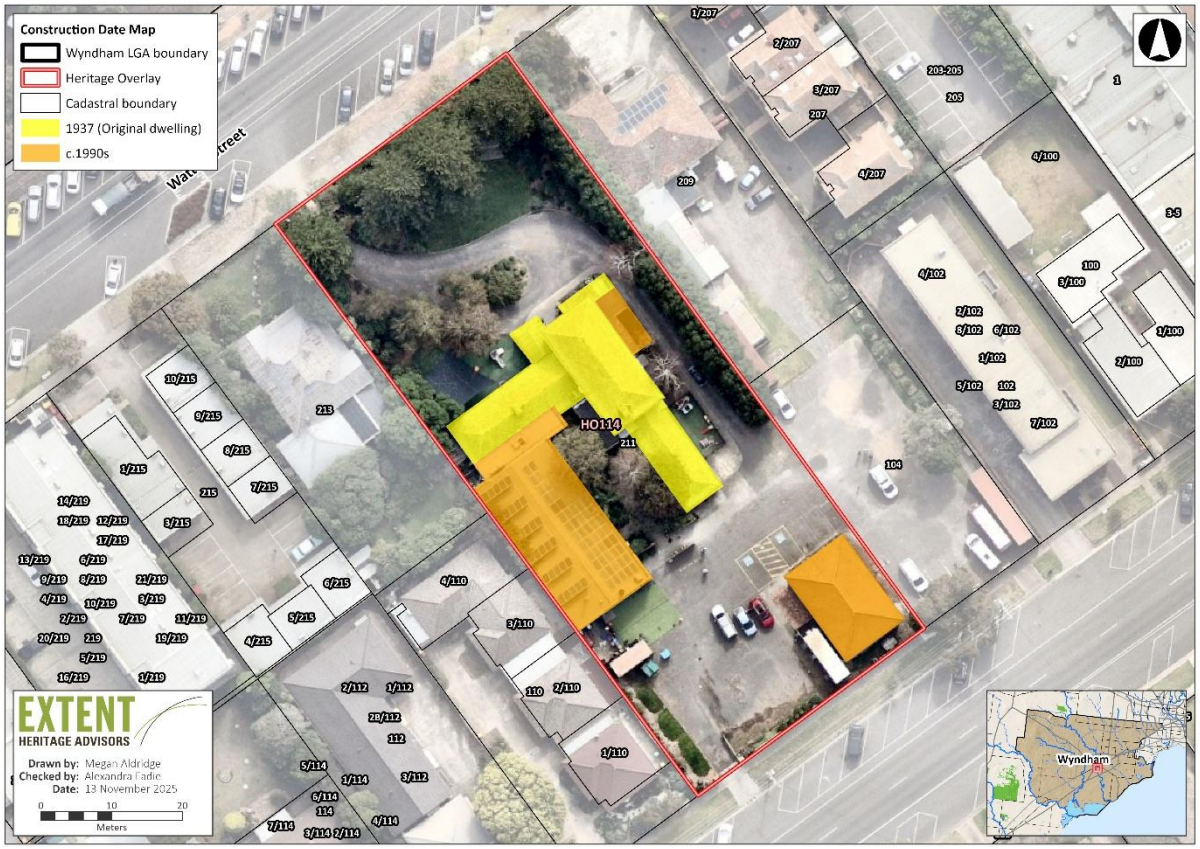


Figure 4. Construction date map of Shirwal Court, 35-39 Deutgam Street, Werribee. *Basemap source*: Nearmap. 2025. *Spatial data source:* VicMap & Department of Transport and Planning

Further investigations should be undertaken by an arborist, or other suitably qualified expert, to confirm the age of the extant mature trees.

History

Silver Birches, located at 211 Watton 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.

This place is located close to Wirribi Yaluk. This is the Bunurong name for the waterway we now know as Werribee River. Wirribi Yaluk is a predominant feature of this Country, carving its way through these plains as it flows from its headwaters north of Ballan into the saltwater of Naarm (the Bunurong word for Port Phillip Bay). It is also the border between the lands of Bunurong and Wadawurrung peoples. Bunurong peoples are the Traditional Owners of this Country, and Wirribi Yaluk is a place of sustenance, abundance and community. The majestic River red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) growing along its banks have provided bark for containers and canoes, while the river's waters have sustained nutritious crustaceans and fish, including the Short-finned eel (*Anguilla australis*), and have supplied fresh water throughout the year (BLCAC, 2026, 11).

Upon the arrival of colonists into Port Phillip Bay from 1835, land north and west of the fledgling Melbourne settlement was quickly usurped. Reports from early explorers highlighted the basalt plains as open, grassy and lightly vegetated. These conditions were ideal for overlanding stock, thus the Wyndham region was soon dominated by squatter pastoralists (Vines 1993, 9; Broome 1984, 23).

The early township of Werribee was positioned in proximity to a ford over Werribee River, 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 steadily. In 1849, Surveyor General Robert Hoddle reserved land for a township, gazetted as 'Wyndham' in 1850 (James and Pritchard 2008, 15; Hocking 2013, 177; Murray 1974, 14). Crown land was sold from 1850, with the country allotments rapidly absorbed by the region's prominent pastoralists (James and Pritchard 2008, 17).

Closer Settlement schemes in the 1890s through until the 1930s marked a turning point, where large estates were subdivided for cropping, boosting population and transforming land use (Lovell Chen 2024, 15; James and Pritchard 2008, 49; Penrose 2001, 9). Beginning in the interwar period with the soldier settlement schemes, then increasing significantly in the post-war period with the wave of European migration, Werribee transformed from a semi-rural township to an expansive and populous suburb of Melbourne over the latter half of the twentieth century (Lovell Chen 2024, 48 & 138).

Place History

When Werribee was initially surveyed, the land on which the house at 211 Watton Street, Werribee is now situated, comprised Allotments 4 and 5 of Section 5, directly south of the Werribee River crossing and within the early Wyndham township subdivision. In 1863, the two allotments were owned separately, with Allotment 4 recorded to have been owned by J. Mason and Allotment 5 by Thomas Rich (Figure 3). Both landholders were not notable figures in the early development of Werribee.

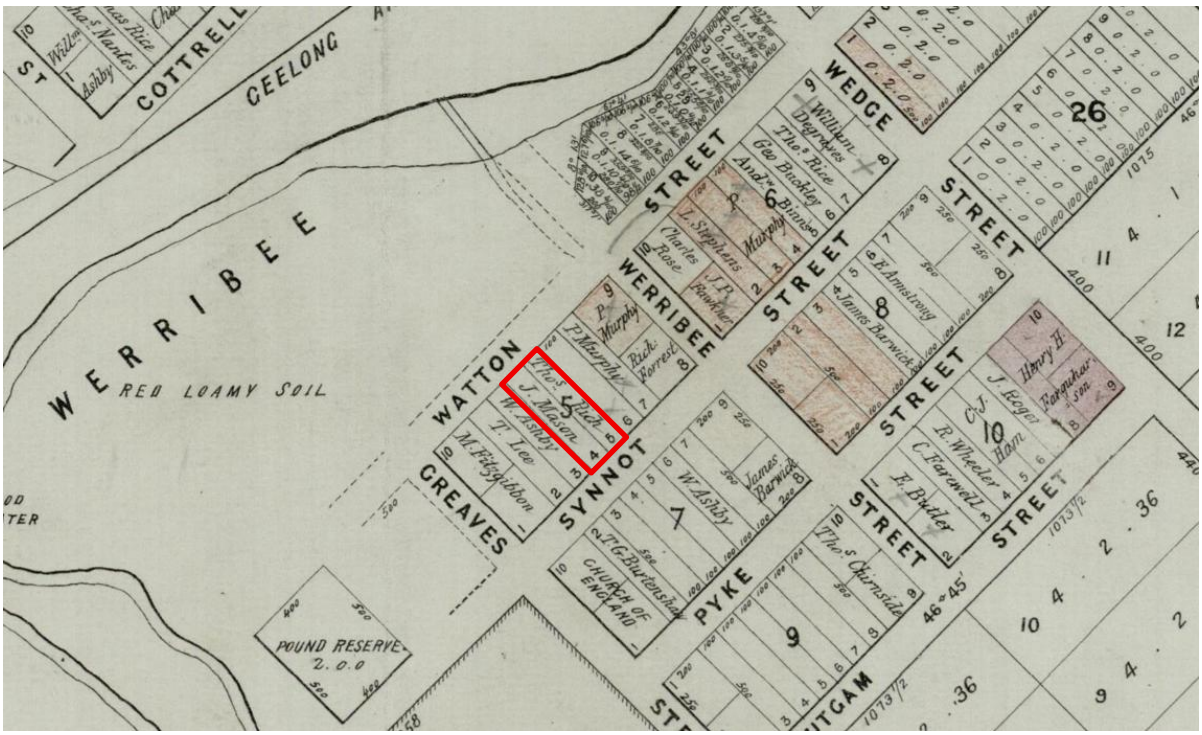


Figure 5. Extract from c.1863 parish plan, showing 211 Watton Street, indicated with red. *Source:* Office of Lands and Survey Melbourne. 1963. *Township of Wyndham.* Cartographic material. State Library Victoria. http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/159894.

Ownership of Dr. Charles Prouse

By the early 1930s, the land at 211 Watton Street was being used as a hospital for the medical practice of Dr. Charles Prouse. Prouse had arrived in Werribee c.1930 and resided at Muswell (HO97). By c.1937, Dr Prouse had purchased another medical practice and closed the hospital in Watton Street, however he retained ownership of the land (Carter 1997, 76). It is unclear when Allotment 4 and 5 was consolidated, however aerial imagery indicates it took place prior to 1951, under the ownership of Dr. Prouse (Figure 6). In 1954, Dr. Prouse sold both allotments to Walter Carter Junior (Carter 1997, 76).



Figure 6. Aerial image of the 211 Watton Street property, taken in 1951 prior to the construction of Silver Birches. *Source:* Landata. 1951. Digitised image. https://www.landata.vic.gov.au/tpc_from_landataonline.aspx

The Carter Family: Construction and ownership of "Silver Birches"

Walter Carter junior was a long time Werribee businessman, having worked at First National Westwood Werribee for 34 years (Westwood 2010). His father was renown within the Werribee area; having established Carter's Poultry Farm in Werribee in the 1920s. By the 1930s, Carter's Poultry Farm was claimed to be the world's largest egg farm, with a flock of 100,000 birds producing 40,000 eggs daily (Melton Express 1935, 4). The 1930s and 1940s were years of increasing prosperity and wealth for the Carter family.

The house 'Silver Birches' was built in 1954 for Walter Carter Junior and his family (Carter 1997, 76). The house was designed in the Post-War International style and broadly considered as one of the three grand Carter homes within Werribee. It appears to have taken architectural inspiration from the earlier homes constructed for the Carter family, drawing from the dark tiled hipped roofs and rectilinear forms of Shirwal Court (HO32), and the cream brick and steel framed ribbon glazing from Monliesha (HO89). The influence of the unique Eastern style flared hipped roofs cannot be confirmed, however it may have been in reference to the popular Modernist design in America at the time, or a nod to the impact of Hideo Katoka on the Carter farms. Mr. Kataoka was Japanese national who worked at the Carter farm during the 1930s as a chick sexer (Carter 1997, 45-46) (Figure 7 and Figure 8).

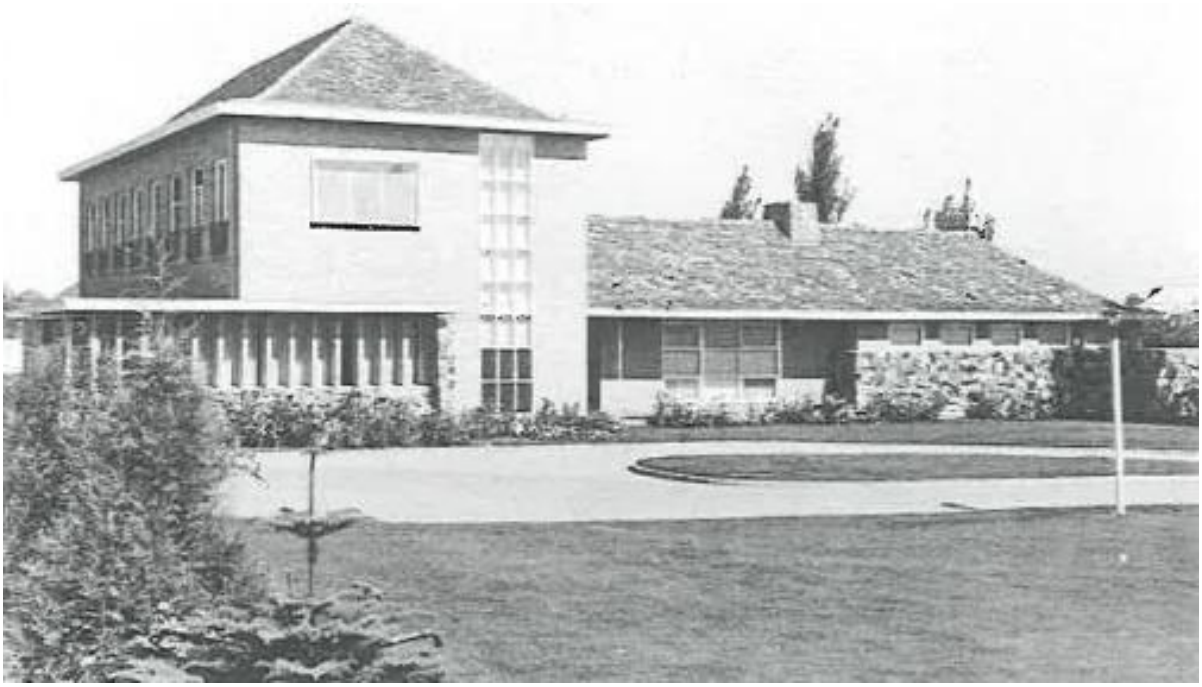


Figure 7. Photograph from 1954, showing the front façade of Silver Birches facing Watton Street. *Source:* Carter, W.M.S. 1997. *The Carter Family of Werribee*. South Melbourne: Corporate Printers (South Melbourne) Pty. Ltd., 116.

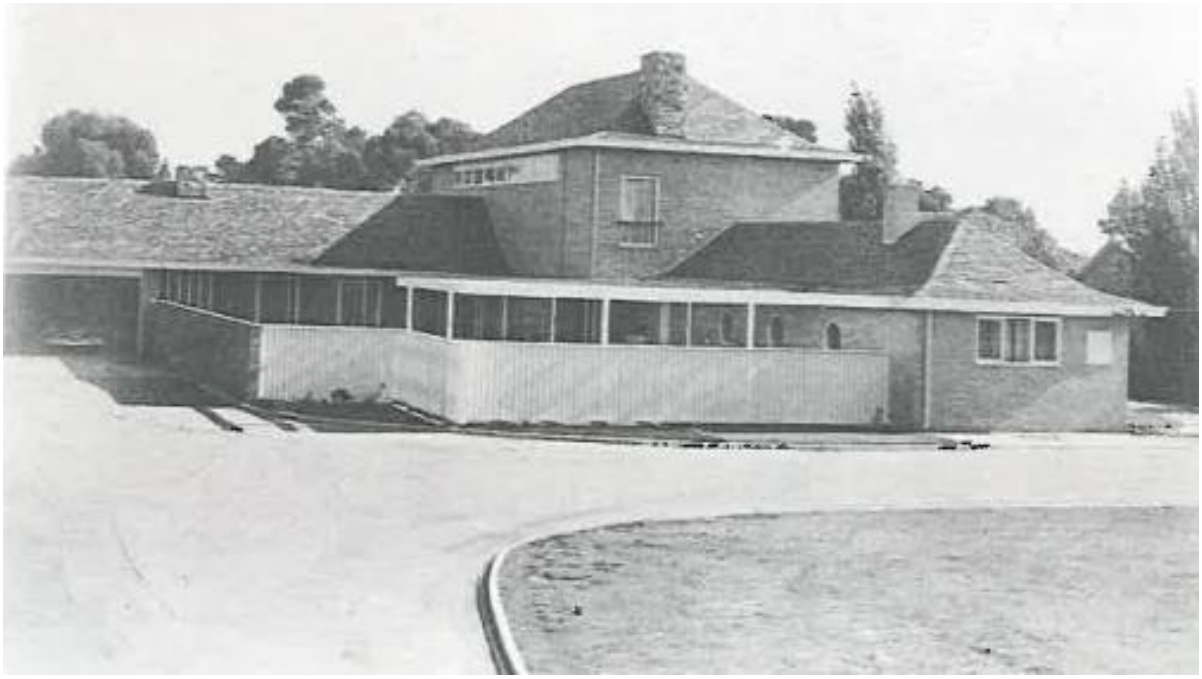


Figure 8. Photograph from 1954, depicting an overview of the rear of Silver Birches, looking northeast towards Watton Street. *Source:* W.M.S. Carter. 1997. *The Carter Family of Werribee.* South Melbourne: Corporate Printers, 116.

In 1977 Silver Birches was advertised for sale (Figure 9 and Figure 10). The auction notice wrote:

> "Situated in heart of thriving township opposite Chirnside Park close vicinity to Werribee District Hospital. A magnificent architect designed 2 storey shingle roof family home 45 squares approx. on one acre of land with two street frontage. The sweeping lawns and garden of this fine home create a tremendous appeal. Property is centrally heated and has an excellent air-conditioning system. Zoned Residential "B" This superb property comprises spacious ent. [entry] hall with panelled sliding doors opening to excellent entertainment areas. The large sitting room with open fireplace, separate dining room, fitted study and parquetry floored rumpus room all capture excellent garden views from picture windows. Modern kitchen, breakfast room and copious laundry. Upstairs are 4 most delightful bedrooms (BIR's), the master bedroom having an en suite bathroom and dressing room, plus fully tiled main bathroom. In addition there is a 2 roomed flat with bathroom completely separated from the main residence. Lock-up garage will accommodate 4 vehicles plus double carport". (The Australian Jewish News 1977, 34).



Figure 9. A 1979 aerial of Werribee, showing Silver Birches with its elliptical driveway, indicated with red arrow. *Source:* Landata. 1979. Digitised image. https://www.landata.vic.gov.au/tpc_from_landataonline.aspx

It is unclear who purchased the property in the 1970s, however the property was sold again in 1980 and 1981. By 1997 the property had been converted from a private residence into a 'reception centre' with a seating capacity of 170 people (Figure 11) (Carter 1997, 76). It is assumed that the contemporary rear hall was added to the property at this time, forming a small courtyard.

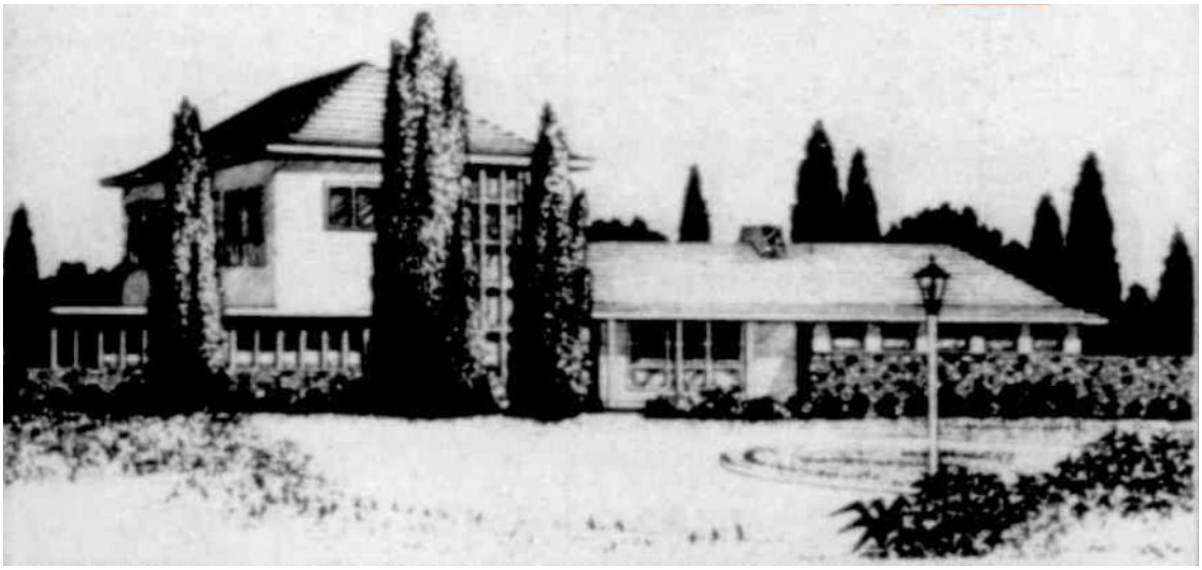


Figure 10. Illustration of Silver Birches from 1977 Auction advertisement. The image shows the garden arrangement to the front façade at this time. *Source:* The Australian Jewish News. 1977. 'Auction, Saturday, 2nd April at 3P.M. Werribee, 211 Watton Street "Silver Birches" Under instructions from W.M.S. & J.G. Carter.' 11 March, 1977, 34. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article262518734.



Figure 11. Photograph of the front façade of Silver Birches in 1997. *Source:* W.M.S. Carter. 1997. *The Carter Family of Werribee.* South Melbourne: Corporate Printers, 116.

The property was sold in 2007 (Realestate.com.au 2025), and is presently occupied by the Wyndham Salvation Army Corps. The building is used for church services and prayer meetings

as well as providing community needs including meals, bible studies, kids club and youth programs. Despite alterations and additions to the house and landscaping, the front fence and early Norfolk Island Pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*) have been retained.

Comparative Analysis

Constructed in the post-war period, Silver Birches reflects broader patterns of residential development in Werribee during the mid to late twentieth century, which saw the rise of Modernist architecture, characterised by innovative designs and new construction techniques. While much post-war suburban growth in Werribee generally comprised modest, single-storey Modernist homes, Silver Birches stands out as a substantial architect-designed residence commissioned by an affluent local family. There are grand, architect-designed homes in the municipality that similarly demonstrate the owners' social status and embraced the principles of Modernism through clean lines, functional layouts, and integration with the landscape. These include:

Sumiya (HO101)

Silver Birches is comparable to Sumiya (HO101) as an example of Modernist architecture within a vernacular context. The use of the cream brick and elongated fenestration are characteristic of this post-war architecture. Sumiya is a smaller residential design and of a later construction date when compared to Silver Birches, which includes a broader landscaping setting to support the contemporary design. As with Silver Birches, Sumiya was similarly designed and commissioned by an affluent family – in this case, Norman and June Thompson, proprietors of GTH Engineering works and active members within the local community.

Shirwal Court (HO32)

Silver Birches is comparable to Villa Franca Shirwal Court (HO32), another of the large Carter residences within Werribee. While of a significantly later construction date, Silver Birches is comparable to Shirwal Court as an example of the ongoing wealth and prosperity of the Carter family and the continued construction of large dwellings that demonstrated sophisticated architectural design in a vernacular context. As with Shirwal Court, Silver Birches includes a landscape and driveway arrangement as part of the overall design.

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Images



Figure 12.Front entrance to Silver Birches from Watton Street, looking south. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 13. Detail of entry gates to Silver Birches from Watton Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 14. Front setback to Silver Birches, looking northeast from entry driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 15. Front north-facing façade of Silver Birches. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 16. East elevation of Silver Birches, looking southwest from driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 17. East elevation of Silver Birches, looking north from driveway. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 18. Rear carpark, looking south to Synnot Street. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 19. Internal courtyard, looking north towards the primary double storey section of Silver Birches. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd. 2025.



Figure 20. Rear building, located to the southeast corner of the property, looking south to Synnot Street.