
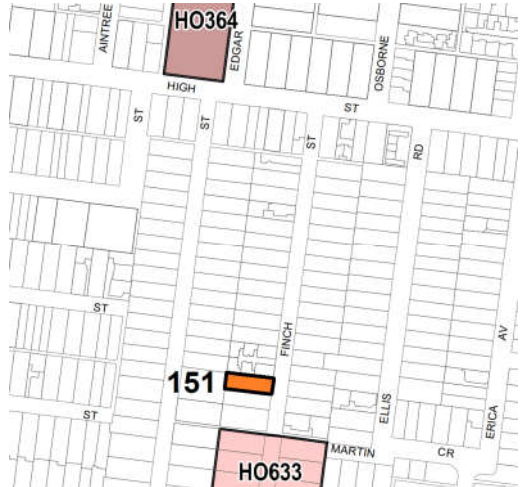


## Built Heritage Pty Ltd: Heritage Assessment 2020

<b>IDENTIFIER</b>	HOUSE	<b>Citation No</b>	N/A
<b>Other name/s</b>	Crossman House (former)	<b>Melway ref</b>	Map 59 F9
<b>Address</b>	151 Finch Street GLEN IRIS	<b>Date/s</b>	1975 (foundations) 1976-78 (house)
<b>Designer/s</b>	Kevin Borland & Associates	<b>Builder/s</b>	Maurice Nankin (1975) Rudi van Giffen (1976-78)
 <p><i>Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, July 2019</i></p>		 <p><i>Location plan and proposed extent of HO</i></p>	
<b>Heritage Group</b>	Residential buildings (private)	<b>Condition</b>	Excellent
<b>Heritage category</b>	House	<b>Intactness</b>	Excellent (few changes)
<b>Recommendation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> External Paint Controls <input type="checkbox"/> Interior Alteration Controls <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Controls	<b>Significance</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> Potentially state <input type="checkbox"/> State

### History

The house at 151 Finch Street, Glen Iris, was built in 1975-78 for hospital owners Jules and Ruth Crossman, to a design by leading Melbourne architect Kevin Borland. Previously based in Great Britain, the Crossmans settled in Australia in 1955 as assisted migrants under the United Kingdom & Australian Government Agreement. Leaving Southampton on 19 January 1955 aboard the *SS New Australia*, the family comprised Julius Lionel "Jules" Crossman (1921-1994), his German-born wife Ruth Charlotte, *nee* Oppenheimer (1916-1995), and their two young children, Daniel (born 1949) and Rachel (born 1950). Arriving in Melbourne on 15 February 1955, the Crossmans initially took up residence in a pre-war brick bungalow in Gillman Street, Cheltenham, but, by the early 1960s, had moved to a grander Edwardian house in Sefton Place, Camberwell. According to electoral rolls, Jules (who cited his occupation as "taxi driver" on the shipping manifest) was employed as an insurance executive, and his wife Ruth as a nurse.

Around 1967, the Crossmans purchased the Kahlyn Private Hospital in Caulfield, which had operated for many years from a Victorian-era mansion on Bambra Road, and reopened it (under the same name) as a private psychiatric clinic, with Ruth as matron.<sup>1</sup> Around the same time, the family moved house again, to an inter-war brick residence in Torrington Place, Canterbury. It was in the early 1970s, while still living in Canterbury, that the Crossmans first encountered architect Kevin Borland (1929-2000). Having burst onto the Melbourne architectural scene in the early 1950s as one of the young co-designers of the prize-winning competition entry for the new Olympic Swimming Pool (1953-56), Borland maintained a steady profile in the later 1950s and early '60s that encapsulated mostly residential projects, as well as a stint as director of the *Australian Women's Weekly* Home Planning Service. From the late 1960s, his reputation rose sharply after winning a succession of architectural plaudits that included an RIAA citation for the Harold Holt Swimming Pool in Malvern (in association with Daryl Jackson), "a House of the Year" award for a weekender in Portsea, and the 1972 Victorian Architectural Medal for his ongoing and innovative work at the Margaret Lytle Memorial School (aka *Preshil*) in Kew.

It was during this high-profile resurgence of Borland's career that he was engaged by Jules and Ruth Crossman to design a block of holiday flats in the regional township of Launching Place. Uniquely intended for personal and professional use, it was to provide four self-contained but interconnected flats: one each for Jules and Ruth, their children (by then in their early twenties), hospital staff and a caretaker. As later reported, the couple "chose their architect and builder carefully and gave them free reign to create and realise the structure".<sup>2</sup> For the challenging hillside site, Borland envisaged a sprawling split-level timber-framed structure on an irregular stepped plan incorporating mezzanines and conversation pits to follow the slope of the land. With its extensive use of vertical timber panelling, log poles and exposed beams, the completed development attracted considerable press attention including a four-page spread in the trade journal *Wood World*. It duly won its architect further peer recognition, receiving a "House of the week" citation in October 1974, followed by the RIAA Housing Award at that year's Victorian Architecture Awards.<sup>3</sup>

No doubt ecstatic by the award-winning work that Borland had done for them at Launching Place, the Crossmans turned to him again when they opted to build a new house for themselves in Finch Street, Glen Iris. The curious background to this commission was neatly summarized by the opening paragraph of an article that appeared in *Belle* magazine in 1978:

*Some three years ago, it was a Melbourne's builder's misfortune to plan a speculative house, lay the foundation, excavate the pool and then run out of money. Subsequently, the land was sold to a small, well-to-do family who had the good fortune to know architect Kevin Borland and the good sense to appreciate Borland's work.*<sup>4</sup>

---

1 The Crossmans' company, Kahlyn Private Hospital Pty Ltd, was registered on 21 June 1968 (Company File No C0073157F). Ruth Crossman is first listed as matron of the hospital in that year's *Sands & McDougall Directory*.

2 "Flats in Launching Place", *Wood World*, Vol 9, No 1 (1976), p 17.

3 John Barker, "Four holiday flats in wild bushland", *Age*, 7 October 1974, p 12; Philip Goad (ed), *Judging Architecture: Issues, Divisions, Triumphs. Victorian Architecture Awards, 1929- 2003*, p 291.

4 Elizabeth Cowell, "The Borland Changeling", *Belle*, July/August 1978, p 60.

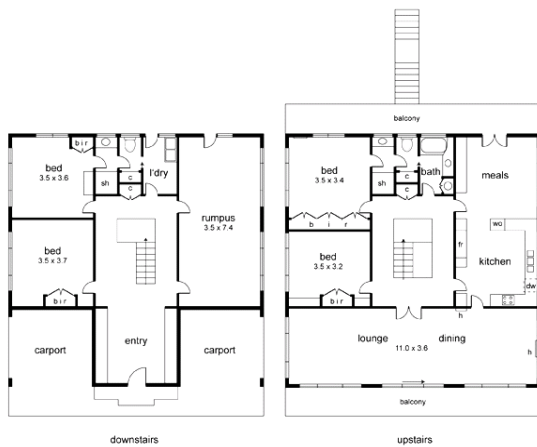


Figure 1: Plan of Kidron Pty Ltd project house of type initially proposed for 151 Finch Street (This example at 15 Peacock Street, Burwood)  
Source: [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)



Figure 2: Exterior of Kidron Pty Ltd project house, of type initially proposed for 151 Finch Street (this example at 559 Waverley Road, Glen Waverley)  
Source: [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)

Unnamed in the 1978 article, the builder in question was one Maurice Nankin, who had been involved in clothing manufacture in the 1950s and early '60s before embracing a career in real estate and property development. His firm, Nankin Building Company Pty Ltd, was founded in 1966 and garnered press attention a few years later for a luxurious house in Balwyn North.<sup>5</sup> In 1969, Nankin created a second company, Starlight Homes Pty Ltd, which was rebadged three years later as Kidron Pty Ltd. In June 1974, Kidron Pty Ltd acquired the site as 151 Finch Street.<sup>6</sup> Here, Nankin planned to erect a speculative house to a standard design that he is known to have built elsewhere around that time, including examples at Burwood (15 Peacock Street), and Glen Waverley (559 Waverley Road). A two-storey four-bedroom brick dwelling on a compact rectilinear footprint, it had a simple grid-like plan with rooms grouped around a central stairwell (Figure 1). At ground level, the stairwell projected to form a front entry lobby, flanked by a pair of carports, while upstairs, a living/ dining room extended the full width of the house, with three full-height window bays opening onto an elongated front balcony. A simple street façade, modular and symmetrical, resulted (Figure 2).

At Finch Street, the rectangular floor slab for one of these standard houses had already been laid by July 1975, when a petition for the winding up of Kidron Pty Ltd was presented to the Supreme Court of Victoria. A month later, the Sherriff's Office advertised the forthcoming sale of the ailing company's interest in "a vacant block of land upon which foundations for a house have been laid and which excavation of a swimming pool has commenced, known as No 151 Finch Street, Malvern".<sup>7</sup> The sale, initially scheduled to take place at the Malvern Police Station on 19 September, was evidently re-scheduled to 12 December.<sup>8</sup>

5 "A luxury home of ideas", *Herald*, 17 May 1968, p 22.

6 Certificate of Title, Volume 3617, Folio 723217, created 12 July 1912.

7 "Auctions", *Age*, 23 August 1975, p 36.

8 "Auctions", *Age*, 12 November 1975, p 33.

In early 1976, the property was officially acquired by Jules and Ruth Crossman when its title was transferred to their company, Kahlyn Nominees Pty Ltd (which was also the registered proprietor of the flats they had built at Launching Place).<sup>9</sup> As related in the 1978 article,

*Instead of smashing up the existing concrete slab, filling in the pool site and starting from scratch, Borland chose the more economically conservative but professionally challenging approach: working around the abandoned slab and pool excavation, he substituted a house of entirely different character than that originally projected for the site.*<sup>10</sup>

Borland's working drawings, prepared by staff member Peter Brook and dated August 1976, show that, while the rectangular footprint of the slab was retained, the internal planning was wholly re-imagined. Instead of a pedestrian layout of central stair lobby flanked by garages with bedrooms and rumpus room to the rear, Borland used a long galley kitchen as a central spine, with open-planned living area to one side, and an angled side hallway leading to a small study, bathroom and laundry. Upstairs, this geometry was echoed in a master bedroom with canted walk-in robe, a smaller second bedroom (evidently for guests, as the Crossman children had effectively left the nest by this time), a galley-style bathroom and air-conditioning plant room. Departing from the rectilinear footprint, Borland added a semi-circular breakfast nook off the kitchen and, to the street, a wedge-shaped wing containing double-height entry lobby with canted ramp in lieu of the usual staircase. This space also incorporated the only aspect of the design specifically requested by the Crossmans: an internal garden (Figure 7). Aside from that, the couple briefed Borland with the simple statement: "Give us the house you think we should have". With deference to what he later summarized as "a lifestyle that revolves around sun, swimming, entertaining, films, arts and their daughter", the architect did precisely that.<sup>11</sup>

Borland's ambitious scheme came to fruition with assistance of two talented European migrant tradesmen: Dutch-born carpenter Rudolf "Rudi" van Giffen (1937-1993), and German-born Andreas "Andy" Ennerst (born 1930). As with the Launching Place flats, the Crossmans left the project entirely in the hand of their architect and builder; it was later reported that the project became, "an example of the first rate results possible when an able and adventurous architect and a builder craftsman of Rudi van Giffen's stature are given financial and artistic freedom". Completed at a cost of \$160,000, the house reportedly encapsulated "some of Borland's most interesting work to date". As *Belle* magazine elaborated: "all energetic elements of interest that characterise Borland's style are present – painstakingly detailed timberwork, and lots of it, soaring double volumes, angular juxtaposition of spaces and complex relationships of levels, galleries and inclined planes – but put together in a very considered, very controlled and mature manner".<sup>12</sup> The article drew particular attention to the deft integration of skylights and clerestories, the fastidious timber panelling, parquetry floors, built-in storage units and planter boxes, and colour scheme including russet-toned bathroom tiles and kitchen in a hue identified as 'Corn Cob', described as "a brilliant buttery yellow paint by Taubmans" (Figure 8).

---

9 Certificate of Title, Volume 3617, Folio 723217, created 12 July 1912.

10 Elizabeth Cowell, "The Borland Changeling", *Belle*, July/August 1978, p 60.

11 Elizabeth Cowell, "The Borland Changeling", *Belle*, July/August 1978, p 60.

12 Elizabeth Cowell, "The Borland Changeling", *Belle*, July/August 1978, p 61.



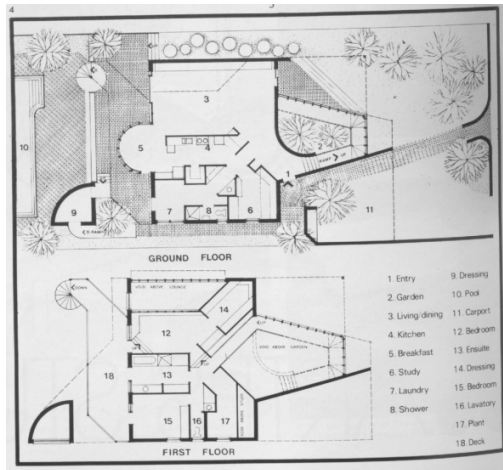


Figure 3: Sketch plan of Borland's scheme for the Crossman House; compare Figure 2  
Source: *Belle*, July/August 1978

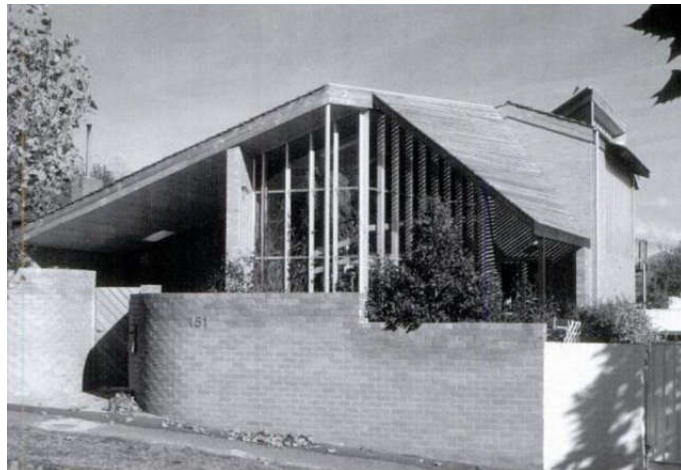


Figure 4: The Crossman House, as seen from the street, photographed soon after completion, c1979  
Source: D Evans & C Hamann, *Kevin Borland*



Figure 5: Another early view of the street frontage of the Crossman House  
Source: *Belle*, July/August 1978



Figure 6: Rear of the Crossman House, showing sundeck, pool, and tower-like outbuilding (right)  
Source: *Belle*, July/August 1978

There was praise for the rear treatment, where rooms opened onto a paved terrace sheltered by a timber-framed structure providing a wide balcony above; to one side, near the pool, a squat tower-like structure (on an unusual quadrant-shaped plan) provided a dressing room at the upper level and wine cellar below. However, the double-height entry foyer/stairwell was lauded as the most spectacular feature, with its angular ramp, full-height north-facing window walls with slatted timber sunscreens, and internal garden with mature tree ferns discreetly irrigated ("both by the Tricklex system developed by the Israelis for application in the Negev Desert, whereby a capillary system provides moisture in small drops, and by a supplementary automatic mist spray that operates four times a day").



Figure 7: Contemporary view of double-height entry lobby/stairwell, with indoor garden  
Source: *Belle*, July/August 1978



Figure 8: Contemporary view of kitchen fitout, showing bright yellow/orange colour scheme  
Source: *Belle*, July/August 1978

Aside from this gushing six-page spread in *Belle* magazine, the completed house received peer recognition when it was nominated for the 1979 Victorian Architecture Awards in the “House of the Year” category.<sup>13</sup> However, the Bronze Medal that year ultimately went to architect Kevin Makin’s own house in Kew, with runner-up citations for other houses by Greg Burgess, Tim Cass, John Kenny and Max May – the last two of whom, incidentally, were former staff members of Borland’s office.<sup>14</sup>

By all accounts, Jules and Ruth Crossman appear to have settled seamlessly into “the house you think we should have”. Of few changes made, perhaps the most major was the adaptation of the small poolside outbuilding, originally intended as a dressing room, into a studio for Ruth’s artistic pursuits (which included working with stained glass), while the space below became a wine cellar for Jules.<sup>15</sup> As it turned out, the family lived in Finch Street for only a few years. Intending to downsize further to an inner-suburban apartment, the couple offered the property for sale by auction in February 1982. A newspaper advertisement, illustrated by a small perspective sketch, promoted the property as a “unique two storey air-conditioned residence skillfully designed by Kevin Borland,” with “exciting features that must be seen” (and with inspection “strictly by appointment”).<sup>16</sup> In late February, several of these “exciting features” were described by Ray Davie, the *Age* real estate reporter, in a feature article in his weekend column.<sup>17</sup> Yet again, there was praise for the surfeit of natural lighting, massive window wall, indoor garden and bright colour scheme, as well as other labour-saving devices such as the laundry chute and spiral staircase connecting the rear balcony with the pool terrace.

13 ‘Architecture Awards 1979: List of projects & buildings nominated’, *Architect*, August 1979, p 8.

14 Philip Goad (ed), *Judging Architecture: Issues, Divisions, Triumphs. Victorian Architecture Awards*, p 292.

15 Emails from Elizabeth Cross, 3 September 2019, and Faye Crossman, 22 December 2019.

16 “Malvern”, *Age*, 3 February 1982, p 35.

17 Ray Davie, “East Malvern: Colourful, innovative and with plenty of indoors greenery for relaxation”, *Age*, 20 February 1982, p 39.

The house was auctioned on 3 March 1982; towards the end of that year, the Crossmans would also offer their Launching Place flats for sale.<sup>18</sup> The couple subsequently took up residence at *Arrandale*, a new high-rise apartment development on St Kilda's Upper Esplanade, designed by Sol Sapir. The new owner of their former home in Finch Street was Dr Jack Wodak (1942-2019), an eminent Melbourne neurologist with a passion for fine art, architecture and music.<sup>19</sup> He would remain living there (from 1990, with his partner Elizabeth Cross) until his death.

## Description

The former Crossman House is a double-storey brick veneer house with an irregular roofline of skillions clad in metal tray-decking. With a broadly T-shaped plan, it presents a triple-fronted street façade that is balanced without being precisely symmetrical: a projecting central wedge-shaped bay flanked on the north side by a carport, and on the south by a brick paved terrace with full-width steps. This central bay, containing a large double-height entry lobby/stairwell, has a full-height metal-framed window wall to two sides (facing the sunny north), and a blank brick wall to the carport (south) side. The north-facing window wall is screened by a steeply-raked timber-framed pergola-like structure, with horizontal slats. (A similar but smaller raked timber screen, formerly shielding the pop-up clerestory window further along the north side of the house, has been removed). The east-facing window wall has a deep timber-lined eave, supported at either end by a tall column and the fin-like projection of the carport wall. The carport wall also incorporates the front door (painted bright yellow) at the far end, linked to the street by a matching brick paved pathway. The carport itself has a graveled floor and a raked ceiling lined with timber boards.



*Figure 9: Recent view of the street frontage, showing the bold skillion roof to the carport side  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd*



*Figure 10: Recent view of the street frontage, showing full-height window wall to lobby/stairwell  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd*

<sup>18</sup> Ray Davie, "Launching Place: Four units in bush setting", *Age*, 11 December 1982, p 35.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Day, "Compassionate and humane understanding of human frailty. Jack Wodak: December 29, 1942 – May 6, 2019", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July 2019.





Figure 11: Recent view of the rear (west elevation) of the Crossman House; compare Figure 6  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd

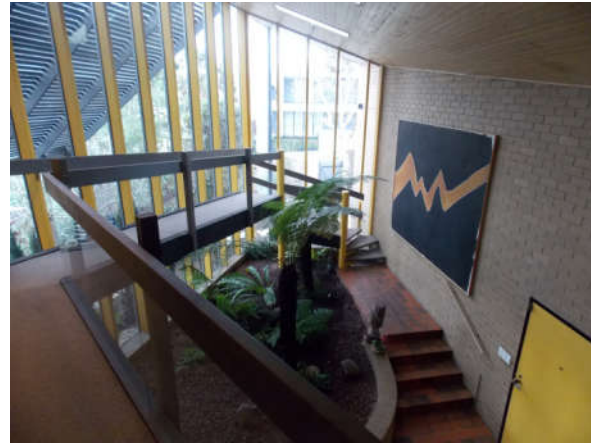


Figure 12: Recent view of entry foyer, showing winding ramp/staircase and double-height window wall  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd

The street boundary of the property is articulated by its original tall garden wall in matching beige brickwork, which curves inward in the centre to form a recessed pedestrian entry. This has a ledged-and-braced gate, with diagonal timber boards, which is a recent reproduction of Borland's original. The adjacent driveway gates, in a matching style, are also not the originals. The recessed timber letter box, paired newspaper tubes and oversized street number 151, are all original, as they can be seen in photographs taken soon after completion (see Figures 4 and 5).

While the north-facing pop-up clerestory window can be glimpsed from further along Finch Street, the remainder of the two side (north and south) elevations, and rear (west) elevation, are not publicly visible. The rear façade, with projecting half-round glass-walled breakfast nook, timber balcony and external stairs with wire mesh balustrades, and quadrant-shaped brick outbuilding, still appear as they did in vintage photographs (see Figure 11; compare Figure 6).

### Condition and Integrity

With only two owners over a period of forty years, the house has been well maintained and subject to few changes. As such, it remains in a notably intact state, and in excellent condition. External alterations tend to be minor and/or sympathetic, and include the removal of a raked timber-slatted sunscreen from the north-facing window (evident in early photographs; see Figure 4), partial re-lining of the carport ceiling (with matching timber boards), replacement of the front gates (with counterparts of a sympathetic Borland-like style) and replacement of a storage unit to the rear of the carport. Internally, the house retains much of its original fabric including timber lining boards, built-in cupboards, and kitchen/bathroom fitouts with original fittings and finishes in vivid 1970s colours. The tiled bathroom floor has been redone in cork tiles (due to water damage in the 1990s), shagpile carpet replaced by corded woollen carpet, and the stair lobby nominally altered by the replacement of the steel mesh balustrade with glazed panels, and the repainting of the plaster wall (now painted blue, but originally sage green). The remainder of the interior colour scheme is wholly original.



## Comparisons

### The work of Kevin Borland in the City of Stonnington

Professionally active in Victoria for half a century (from the early 1950s to the mid-1990s), Kevin Borland was a prodigious architect and is known to have designed a several buildings in what is now the City of Stonnington. The 2006 monograph, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, by Douglas Evans and Conrad Hamann, includes an appendix of the architect's work that lists seven projects in the municipality, including the Crossman House.<sup>20</sup> These, in chronological order with dates and other details as recorded by Evans, are as follows:

- 1960        *Rebuilding of "The Embers", South Yarra (Borland & Trewenack)*
- 1960        *Lees Flats, Park Street, South Yarra (Borland & Trewenack)*
- 1966        *Alterations to "Giftmakers" for Barbara DeSailly, Chapel Street, South Yarra*
- 1968-69    *Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Centre, Edgar Street, Glen Iris  
(Kevin Borland & Associates in association with Daryl Jackson Architects)*
- 1978        *Former Hearst Residence, East Malvern*
- 1978        *Former Crossman House, Finch Street, East Malvern*
- 1990        *Additions to M & M Horne Residence, Epping Street, East Malvern*

Aside from the obvious fact that they were all designed by Borland, none of the other projects on this list have much in common with the Crossman House. James Noall's *Embers* nightclub, which was a refit and renovation of an existing building at 53-55 Toorak Road, was completed in late 1959, only to be damaged by a bomb blast the following year. After the club closed in 1963, the building was refitted by successive occupants before it was finally demolished for apartments in the early 2000s. The former premises of Barbara De Saily's *Giftmakers* shop (confirmed to have been located at 1383 Malvern Road, Malvern, rather than Chapel Street, South Yarra) remains standing, but no evidence appears to remain of Borland's internal fitout.

The Lees Flats in South Yarra, verified as standing at 77 Park Street, is a four-storey block of flats of generic modernist form, appraised by Evans as "in good condition but architecturally unremarkable".<sup>21</sup> Borland's renovations for the Horne family of Malvern East, who occupied a large Federation-style brick villa at 13 Epping Street, appear to have been minor; nothing of the architect's hand remains apparent when the well-maintained dwelling is seen from the street.

The Harold Holt Memorial Pool, more accurately addressed as 1409-1413 High Street, is a striking concrete block building in the Brutalist style that remains largely intact and in excellent condition. Added to the *Victorian Heritage Register* in 2006, the building is by far the best-known building in the City of Stonnington with which Borland was involved. However, it is worth noting that, as the project was undertaken in association with his former student Daryl Jackson, the extent of Borland's contribution has been the subject of scholarly debate.

---

20    Douglas Evans and Conrad Hamann, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, pp 303-310.

21    Douglas Evans and Conrad Hamann, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, p 305.



Figure 13: Exterior of Embers Nightclub in Toorak Road, South Yarra (1959; demolished)  
Source: *Cross Section*, Oct 1959



Figure 14: Harold Hold Memorial Swimming Pool, by Kevin Borland & Daryl Jackson in association (1966-69)  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd

As Doug Evans has pointed out, Borland secured the commission the strength of his prior involvement with the Olympic Pool project, but deferred much of the actual design to his young associate.<sup>22</sup> While Evans has noted that Borland was “insistent on the curtain wall glazing”, and Conrad Hamann has perceived Borland’s hand in some of the internal detailing, the overall form and design of the building is conceded to be most strongly indicative of Jackson’s work.

Of the projects cited in Evans’ list, the Hearst House at Malvern East would seem to be the most pertinent comparator to the Crossman House, not only as a private residential commission but also for its comparable date and address. However, research to date has failed to locate the house, much less verify its current status. Evans’ book does not cite an exact address (or even a street name), and consultation of contemporary sources, such as directories and electoral rolls, has not identified anyone with the surname Hearst (or possible variant spellings such as Hurst or Hirst) living in Malvern, Malvern East or Glen Iris in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

In recent communication, Evans has noted that his published list of projects should not be considered exhaustive; he is already aware of additional projects (either inadvertently omitted from his list, or which have only come to light since publication) that include a few more in the City of Stonnington.<sup>23</sup> These projects, plus a few others newly identified by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, are listed below:

- 1955-56 House (for Dr Max Suss?), 21 Grandview Grove, Armadale
- 1958 House (for Jack Lazarus), 13-15 Dunraven Avenue, Toorak
- 1968 Duplex (for R G Gamble?), 248-250 Kooyong Road, Toorak
- 1970 House remodelling (client unknown), 8 Balfour Street, Toorak
- 1978 House (for Syd & Di Silber), 20-22 Ferncroft Avenue, Malvern East

<sup>22</sup> Email from Douglas Evans, 11 August 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Email from Douglas Evans, 11 August 2019.

The house at 21 Grandview Grove (Figure 15), for which Borland called tenders in late 1955, is typical of his residential work of that time: a flat-roofed house of stark modernist form, with cream brick walls and full-height windows.<sup>24</sup> However, it has been altered/enlarged in recent years, including a major two-storey addition along its north side, by architect Peter Maddison.<sup>25</sup> The house at 15 Dunraven Avenue, designed a few years later for “prominent left wing lawyer” Jack Lazarus, was demonstrative of a shift in Borland’s style from academic modernism towards a more free-form approach. Sited diagonally across its double block, the two-storey brick dwelling had a low hipped roof, broad slatted eaves and carport with decorative diagonal bracing (Figure 16). Cited by Doug Evans as one of Borland’s “noteworthy although less architecturally significant residential commissions” of the period, the house has since been much altered, including rendering of the brickwork and infilling of the carport.<sup>26</sup> (Figure 17)

The pair of semi-detached dwellings at 248-250 Kooyong Road (Figure 18) occupies a steep triangular block at the northern top of the road, overlooking the railway line.<sup>27</sup> Responding to this challenging site (hitherto occupied by split-level Knitlock house designed by Walter Burley Griffin), Borland proposed a two-storey building on a compact stepped plan, with a ramps linking the street level with entries at first floor level, a projecting half-round glazed stairwell bay, and living areas with angled walls to exploit the views. With its rough clinker brickwork, limed timber boarding and angled geometry, the duplex anticipated Borland’s characteristic residential style of the 1970s. Since the early 2000s, the building has been altered by a partial second storey addition to the southernmost of the two flats, at No 248.

The house that Borland renovated at 8 Balfour Street, just around the corner from the Kooyong Road duplex, was a modest gable-roofed Victorian villa on an elongated narrow plan to which he added a substantial flat-roofed rear win that stepped down the sloping site. While Borland’s additions are barely visible from the street, online images from recent real estate listings show that the work was wholly typical of his output at the time, with angled walls, full-height windows and an unusual recessed entry porch.

In the late 1970s, Borland designed a house for Sydney and Diane Silber on a double block in Ferncroft Avenue, Malvern East.<sup>28</sup> Set within a native garden, the sprawling dwelling included many features that defined Borland’s domestic work at the time: an asymmetrical plan with splayed corners and angled walls (as well as a curved bay window to the master bedroom), irregular roofline, log pole columns, external finish of timber and roughcast render, outdoor deck areas, and an interior with steep cathedral ceilings, exposed rafters and lining boards. Regrettably, this fine example of Borland’s mature residential work was demolished circa 2010.

---

24 “Tenders”, *Age*, 8 October 1955, p 31.

25 Email from Douglas Evans, 11 August 2019. Evans also suggested that the house might have previously been altered by architect Bernard Brown, who was in partnership with Borland in the 1980s.

26 Douglas Evans and Conrad Hamann, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, p 40.

27 Philip Cohen, “Kevin Borland, the Architects’ Group and the New Gordon House”, in Douglas Evans and Conrad Hamann, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart*, p 219.

28 Email from Iain Carmichael (Director, Jellis Craig Armadale), 6 August 2019.





Figure 15: Original part of house at 21 Grandview Grove, Armadale (Kevin Borland, 1955-56)  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd



Figure 16: Lazarus House at 15 Dunraven Avenue, Toorak, (Borland & Trewenack, 1958)  
Source: D Evans & C Hamann, Kevin Borland



Figure 17: The former Lazarus House in Toorak as it appears today, showing extent of alteration  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd



Figure 18: Duplex at 248-250 Kooyong Road (Kevin Borland & Associates, 1970)  
Source: photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd



Figure 19: Exterior of the Silber House, Malvern East (Kevin Borland & Associates, 1978, demolished)  
Source: [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)



Figure 20: Interior of the Silber House, Malvern East (Kevin Borland & Associates, 1978, demolished)  
Source: [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)

## Conclusion

Kevin Borland is known to have designed at least a dozen buildings in what is now the City of Stonnington. Only one of these, the Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool in Malvern East (co-designed with Daryl Jackson) is currently included on the heritage overlay schedule to the planning scheme (HO364), having previously been classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) in 1999 and added to the *Victorian Heritage Register* in 2006.

Of Borland's other work in the City Stonnington, no evidence remains of two early commercial fitout projects (for *Embers* nightclub in Toorak and the *Giftmakers* shops in Malvern), while a speculative block of flats in South Yarra is deemed to be of relatively little architectural merit. Of the half-dozen private residential commissions that Borland did in the municipality, two (in Balfour Street, Toorak, and Epping Street, Malvern East) were minor renovation/addition projects, similarly of limited architectural interest. Of his complete houses, two (at Grandview Grove, Armadale and Kooyong Road, Toorak) have been enlarged by second-storey additions, while a third (in Dunraven Road, Toorak) has been remodelled virtually beyond recognition.

The Crossman House and the Silber House, of comparable date and location, were textbook examples of Borland's mature domestic work of the period. With the latter demolished as recently as 2010, the Crossman House thus remains as a unique survivor of Borland's residential work in the City of Stonnington. Virtually unaltered (due to having only two owners in forty years), it also stands out as Borland's most intact house in the entire municipality. As such, it is considered to reach the threshold for cultural heritage significance at the local level, and is a prime candidate for addition to the heritage overlay schedule.

## **Statement of Significance**

### *What is significant?*

The former Crossman House at 151 Finch Street, Glen Iris, is a double-storey skillion-roofed brick veneer residence on a T-shaped plan, with street façade dominated by a projecting central bay with full-height glazing to two sides. Erected in 1976-78 (utilising an existing floor slab that had been laid on the site by a previous owner in 1975), it was designed by noted Melbourne architect Kevin Borland for Jules and Ruth Crossman, who had previously commissioned him to design a much-published block of holiday flats at Launching Place.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire exterior of the house, the original interior fabric (including built-in furniture, timber paneling, indoor garden bed, ramp, floor tiles, and kitchen and bathroom fitouts) as well as the original garden wall along the front property line.

### *Why is it Significant?*

The house satisfies the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Stonnington planning scheme:

- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics
- Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Stonnington's history.

### *How is it Significant*

At the local level, the house is architecturally significant as an excellent and notably intact example of the work of eminent Melbourne architect Kevin Borland. Borland, who initially secured fame as one of the co-designers of the Olympic Swimming Pool (1953-56), went on to an illustrious career that encapsulated highly-regarded work in both the residential and non-residential sphere, securing him a succession of architectural awards. While Borland designed at least a dozen buildings in what is now the City of Stonnington, several have been demolished or much altered and others are only of limited architectural merit. In a municipality-wide context, the virtually unaltered Crossman House stands out as the most intact of several Borland-designed houses in the City of Stonnington, and also as unique surviving example of his mature residential work of the later 1970s (its only local comparator in that respect, the Silber House in Malvern East, having been demolished circa 2010). It is his most important building in the City of Stonnington after the celebrated Harold Holt Memorial Swimming Pool, in nearby High Street, which is included on the *Victorian Heritage Register*. In Borland's broader oeuvre, the Crossman House is also of scholarly interest a follow-up commission from the same family who had engaged him to design their much-published and award-winning block of holiday flats at Launching Place. (*Criterion H*)

At the local level, the house is aesthetically significant as an example of the highly distinctive style that defined Borland's mature work, particularly in the residential sphere, in the 1970s. This aesthetic, broadly characterised by bold angular geometry in plan form and elevation, and the frank expression of unadorned materials, emerged in his work in the mid-1960s and would become something of his trademark for more than a decade thence. The Crossman House, with its irregular skillion roofline, clerestory windows and unusual tripartite façade incorporating a projecting wedge-shaped stairwell/lobby with corner window wall and raked timber slat screen, can be considered a textbook example of his residential work of that period (all the more remarkable when one considers that Borland had been obliged to create the house from an existing rectilinear slab already laid on the site). Some of the more unusual elements of the design, such as the slick double-height window wall, the ramp/staircase that winds its way around an indoor garden, and the curved rear outbuilding, remain more potently evocative of Borland's contemporaneous work in the non-residential sphere (*Criterion E*)

### **References**

Elizabeth Cowell, "The Borland Changeling", *Belle*, July/August 1978, pp 60.

Ray Davie, "East Malvern: Colourful, innovative and with plenty of indoor greenery for relaxation", *Age*, 20 February 1982, p 39.

Douglas Evans & Conrad Hamann, *Kevin Borland: Architecture from the Heart* (2006).

### **Authorship**

Citation prepared by Simon Reeves, principal of Built Heritage Pty Ltd  
16 December 2019; amended 23 January 2020, 22 June 2020 and 20 July 2020



Appendix: Excerpts of Working Drawings by Kevin Borland & Associates

