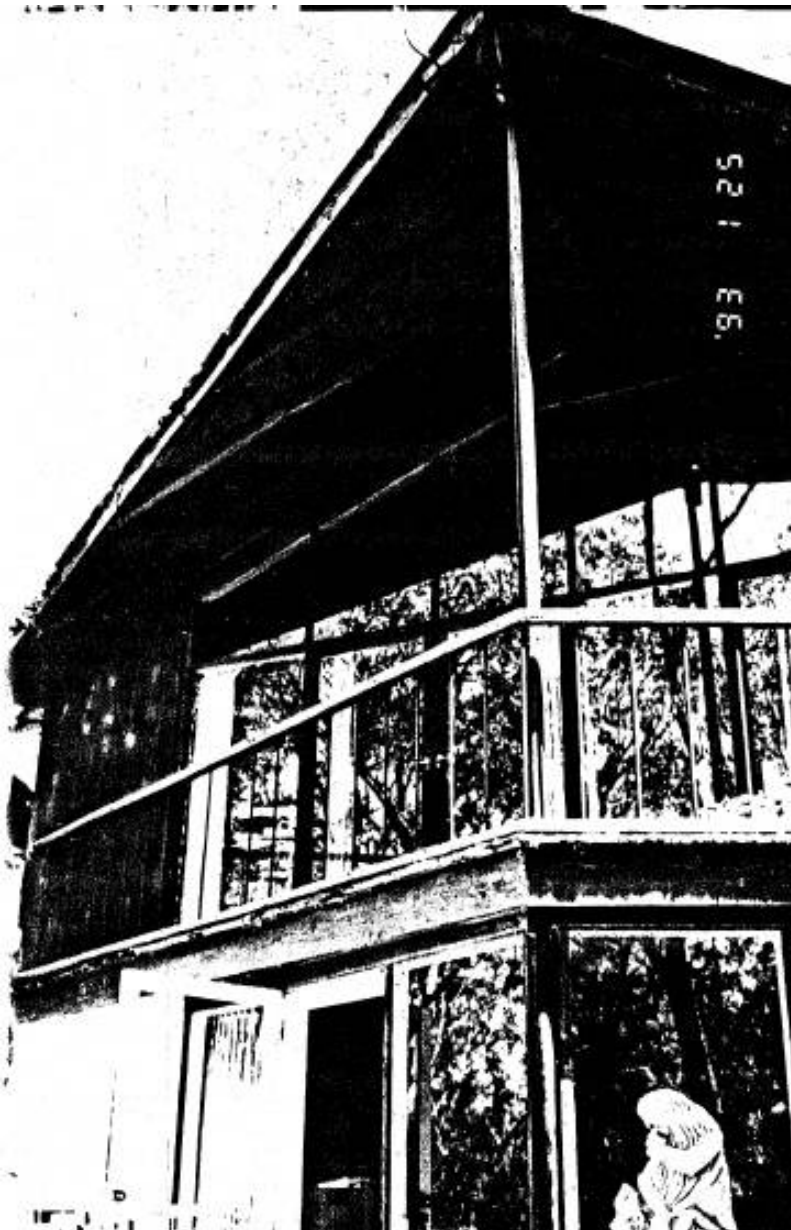




**N I L L U M B I K**  
THE GREEN WEDGE SHIRE

Victorian Heritage Database Report

# DOWNING-LE GALLIENNE MUDBRICK RESIDENCE AND GARDEN, 12 YARRA BRAES RD, ELTHAM



**Location:**

12 YARRA BRAES RD ELTHAM, NILLUMBIK SHIRE

**Heritage Status / Level of Significance:**

Included in Heritage Overlay

**Heritage Overlay Number:** HO172

**Listing Authority:** Nillumbik Shire

**Statement of Significance:**

REVISED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, CONTEXT, 2010

What is significant?

The c1948-64 house and the surrounding site to a radius of 30 metres.

How is it significant?

The house is architecturally and historically significant to the Shire of Nillumbik.

Why is it significant?

The house is architecturally significant as an important work by Alistair Knox, the prominent 'Eltham-style' architect. Knox's mud brick houses had an important influence on the development of the Shire of Nillumbik's distinctive residential character during the mid part of the 20th century, and went on to influence Australian architectural styles more generally. Like many other 'Eltham-style' buildings, the house was constructed in stages over an extended period of time and featured the extensive use of mud brick. The house is very unusual in both detail and arrangement - it comprises three separate but linked buildings (Criteria F & H).

The house is historically significant because it is connected with a number of important figures. It was commissioned by the musician and pioneering composer of modern music, Dorian Le Gallienne, and the economist, Richard Downing (who was later Professor of economics and chairman of the ABC) (Criterion H). Several prominent local figures helped in the house's construction, including the renowned artist Clifton Pugh (who made the mud bricks and erected the walls on the second wing), the artist John Howley (who rendered the walls), and the well-known actor Wynn Roberts (Criterion H). The house is historically significant because Le Gallienne and Downing's commission of the property illustrates the way in which intellectuals were drawn to Eltham in the period following the end of World War II. The design of the house and its bush setting epitomise the ideal of the 'Eltham lifestyle' that was developed from the 1940s to the 1960s (Criterion A).

**BICK STUDY, 1992**

The Downing-Le Gallienne residence has historic importance for its original owners and architect and epitomises the Eltham lifestyle from the 1940s to the 1960s. Comprising three separate but linked buildings, this residence is very unusual in both arrangement and detail and is an important work of the architect Alistair Knox. The house was built in stages for musician and composer Dorian Le Gallienne and Richard Downing, later Professor of Economics and Chairman of the A.B.C. both illustrate the intellectuals drawn to Eltham after the Second World War. Le Gallienne was the pioneering composer of modern music in Victoria before 1945, when there was little or no awareness of and interest in it. The artist, Clifton Pugh, and the well-known actor, Wynn Roberts both worked on the Downing-Le Gallienne house. Knox's mud brick houses had an important influence on the development of the Shire's distinctive residential character during this period.

**BASIS OF SIGNIFICANCE:****ILLUSTRATION OF THE THEMES****HISTORY**

ARCHITECTURE

RARITY

DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE: LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

EXTENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTIRE BUILDING, GARDEN AND SITE TO A RADIUS OF 30 METRES.

### **Description**

ARTISTS AND THE ELTHAM LANDSCAPE

EMERGENCE OF AN ELTHAM LIFESTYLE

PROMINENT RESIDENTS

DISTINCTIVE ELTHAM BUILDING STYLES

PRIVATE PLANTING

Residence

Style - Eltham style.

Design unique.

Plan three building, southern rectangular in plan, other two building/s polygonal and rectangular.

Two storeyed,

Walls solid mud brick, cement rendered.

Roofs gabled with eaves corrugated ironclad. Features are the size of the house, the polygonal fronted building with the spiral metal staircase in the double storey, window, balconies, timber posts, first floor gangway and the mix of timber and mud brick walling.

Garden

The property edges Yarra Braes Rd. Dense native scrub screens house and garden. Access was by two roads to either end of the house. These descended steeply to the level of the house among the native bush, re-growth from cleared, grazed land and has both an understorey and over-canopy.

The house occupies a narrow terrace, paved to front and rear, especially narrow to the rear where the garden cuts into the slope and larger to the front. To the rear stone has been used for paving and retaining walls and there is a small ornamental pond. To the front brick paths give on to moss infested lawn. Evidence of the garden having been planted are occasional non-indegenous trees including *Eucalyptus maculata*, otherwise garden and bush blend in a most attractive and subtle way.

In front of the house an informal path descends the hillside eventually leading to the river. Deep within the vegetation lies a tennis court, screen from view.

The extent of the garden has been reduced by a recent sub-division which has destroyed steps created as part of the work by Stones and Ford.

Original and Present Use: Residence

3.14.2 Using Australian materials in construction

8.10.4 Designing and building fine buildings

8.12 Living in and around Australian homes

8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

8.10.2 Creating visual arts

Heritage Study / Consultant	Nillumbik - Shire of Eltham Heritage Study , David Bick, 1992
Construction Date Range	1948 - 1964
Architect / Designer	Knox, Alistair
Municipality	NILLUMBIK SHIRE
Other names	
Hermes number	104530
Property number	

*This place/object may also be State heritage listed. Check the Victorian Heritage Database. For further details, contact the local Council or go to Planning Schemes Online*