

# Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest) Notice 2008 (No 1)

Notifiable Instrument NI 2008 - 100

made under the

*Heritage Act 2004* section 34 Notice of decision about provisional registration

---

**1. Name of instrument**

This instrument is the Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration for 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest) Notice 2008 (No 1)

**2. Registration details of the place**

Registration details of the place are at Attachment A: Provisional Register entry for 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest.

**3. Reason for decision**

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The provisional register entry is at Attachment A.

**4. Date of Provisional Registration**

4 April 2008.

**5. Indication of council's intention**

The council intends to decide whether to register the place under division 6.2.

**6. Public consultation period**

The Council invites public comment by 8 May 2008 on the provisional registration of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest to

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2602

.....

**Gerhard Zatschler**  
**Secretary ACT Heritage Council**  
**GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2602**

**7 April 2008**



ACT Heritage Council

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HERITAGE REGISTER  
(Provisional Registration Details)

Place

For the purposes of s. 33 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

- **24 Arthur Circle**

Block 14, Section 44

**FORREST**

**DATE OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Notified: 9 April 2008 Notifiable Instrument: 2008/NI2008-100

**PERIOD OF EFFECT OF PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION**

Start Date: 4 April 2008      End Date: 4 September 2008

**Extended Period (if applicable)      Start Date \_\_\_\_\_      End Date**

\_\_\_\_\_

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at the ACT Heritage Unit. For further information please contact:

The Secretary  
ACT Heritage Council  
GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

Telephone: 132281      Facsimile: (02) 6207 2229

---

## IDENTIFICATION OF THE PLACE

- 24 Arthur Circle, Block 14, Section 44, Suburb of Forrest, ACT.
- 

## HISTORY OF THE PLACE

Residential settlements such as Forrest were an integral part of the creation and planning of Canberra. Development of the suburb began in 1928 and the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) changed the original name Walter Burley Griffin had given to the suburb, Blandfordia, to Forrest. To this day the suburb consists primarily of individual houses; 69%, with 14% townhouses, flats and units.<sup>1</sup>

The suburb is located to the south of Parliament House and in the majority of cases the houses are set in large gardens. Blandfordia 4 Housing Precinct (Forrest Conservation Area), designed by the architecture firm of Oakley and Parkes in 1926, and constructed 1927-29, would appear to be the earliest development in the suburb.

The 1933 plan of Canberra, three years after the period of administration under the FCC, shows many of the residential blocks had been developed except for the area north of National Circuit, the area inside of Arthur Circle, and the area south of Arthur Circle. The inner side of Arthur Circle, (including 24 Arthur Circle), was slowly developed over the next twenty years. As Paul Reid notes, for Canberra the years between 1930 and 1950 “were the hard years of the Depression, World War 11 and post war recovery....Canberra’s development during this period was piecemeal and slow”.<sup>2</sup>

Those houses that were built were brick cottages with pitched tiled roofs.

Oliphant was commissioned by Mr & Mrs Lea to design their three-bedroom house at 24 Arthur Circle, the only stipulation being that the living room and main bedroom were to have bay windows. The form and style was the architect's own choice without influence from the client.<sup>3</sup> It would appear from the dates on the approved drawing that it took the then planning authority over four months to approve the plans. The chief architect's signature is dated 20.3.1940 while C S Daley's signature is dated 31.7.40. This length of time taken to approve a single residence was unusual at that time. Houses were often approved within days or weeks. It is possible that the design was considered controversial resulting in a lengthy approval process.<sup>4</sup>

Oliphant designed all the original houses adjacent to 24 Arthur Circle, both to the sides and rear. The houses were traditional in design; pitched tiled roofs and constructed of brick.

H V Hunt built the 24 Arthur Circle residence.<sup>5</sup> Mrs Lea remained in the house until 1995 and during the Lea's 55 years living there the house was unaltered. The house was extended to the rear in 1996. The extension, while quite large, was designed to limit the impact on the original place.

The house was extended to the west in 1996 and a swimming pool was added. David Boughton, a local architect, designed the extension.<sup>6</sup> The two changes to the front of the residence that affect its original form and fabric are the render and painted finish to the original face brickwork and the addition of

the raised curved path and support wall across the front of the house and around the lower half of the main bedroom half-circle window. The path and support wall detract from the original design preventing the reading of the cubic form and the curved form meeting the ground plane.

The original recessed entry to the residence has been retained.

The main changes internally include the following:

- The wall and double doors between the living and dining rooms have been removed;
- The kitchen has been renovated and a new opening into the extension has been located to the northwest corner;
- The bathroom has been renovated and now forms the ensuite to the main bedroom;
- The main bedroom has been enlarged by combining it with the original third bedroom by removing the dividing wall;
- The 1st bedroom has been altered to a study with the door relocated from the passage to the entry lobby, and
- The fenestration has been altered to a small extent, with new clear finished timber framed windows replacing the original painted timber framed windows.

The expression of the three-dimensional cubic massing is still apparent from the street.

### **Modern Architecture**

The practitioners of modern architecture attempted to create a new built environment led by a small number of theorists and practitioners concerned with the modern world; technology, truth in art and the health and well being of the community. It began in the early part of the twentieth century, founded on functionalism and abstract painting, and its originators were in general young European architects, some of who were associated with architecture schools. Except for a small number of architects who travelled through Europe in the 1930s, architects who practised in countries such as Australia, well away from the main centres of activity, relied primarily on second hand information and photographs in magazines.<sup>7</sup>

Modern architecture was very rarely built in Australian cities during the period five years either side of the WWII, and when modern buildings were constructed they were viewed with scepticism. The architecture of these early years has been given the term 'functionalism' to differentiate it from the period of modern architecture that became more prevalent in the 1950s to 1970s often referred to as the 'International' style.<sup>8</sup>

The introduction to Australia of modern (functionalist) architecture from Europe came relatively late. While a reasonable number of buildings were built in the 1920s in Europe, and were promulgated in architecture publications, Australian architects did not take it up until the mid 1930s. The period between 1915-1940 identified by Apperly, Irving and Reynolds in *Identifying Australian Architecture* is a convenience of chronology, which could lead to a misunderstanding of the significance of a building designed in this style in 1940. The authors used the start of WWI to the start of WWII as an easily recognised period in history to describe this period, not because this style of architecture began in Australia in 1915.

Kenneth Oliphant's functionalist architecture may have been influenced by Australian architecture of the time or published work from Europe. In Australia this may have included work in Victoria by Geoffrey Mewton and Roy Grounds Architects in projects such as the Critchley Parker House, Upper Beaconsfield, 1933, published in the "Australian Home Beautiful" and the George Stooke House, Brighton, 1934.<sup>9</sup> It may also have been influenced by Australian commercial and institutional architecture including the Automotive Engineering

Building, Sydney Technical College and the Mechanical Engineering Building Newcastle Technical College, both designed by the NSW Government Architect in 1938.<sup>10</sup>

It is likely that these influences came from either Europe directly, Roy Grounds, Sydney Ancher and a very small number of other architects having visited Europe in the 1930s, or from the English interpretation of them. The modern movement was beginning to have some affect on English architecture in the early 1930s. In Europe, influences, especially modern architecture incorporating face brickwork, may have included the architecture of WM Dudok in Holland and Mies van der Rohe in Germany.

The architecture of 24 Arthur Circle, apart from the circular forms, most closely recalls the work of the Dutch architect, Willem Dudok. Dudok's most influential work was the Town Hall, Hilversum, Holland, 1930, with its strong horizontal and vertical brick forms, concrete hoods and simple cornices. These elements can be seen in the Arthur Circle house with the play of the two south side chimney forms against the stepped horizontal rectangular mass of the house, the brick cornice and the concrete hoods.

It is important to recognise that there were two primary external wall finishes adopted by the functionalist architects, both were plain as well as smooth surfaces, alluding to the 'machine aesthetic'. The most recognisable and more frequently used was a smooth rendered finish often painted white. The other was face brickwork.

24 Arthur Circle was one of the first modern buildings designed in Canberra, and was a relatively early example of functionalist architecture constructed in face brickwork in Australia.<sup>11</sup>

### **Kenneth Henry Bell Oliphant (1894-1975)**

Kenneth Oliphant (1894-1975) was one of Canberra's first independent practising architects, and may have been the first. He was sent to Canberra in 1926 from Melbourne as the supervising architect for the Blandfordia 4 Housing project, now Forrest Conservation Area, which the Melbourne firm of Oakley & Parkes had won in a 1924 government-run competition. Oliphant remained in Canberra and established his own practice in 1927, retiring in 1960. Between 1927 and 1953 he undertook literally hundreds of private commissions, including houses in the inner suburbs of Canberra and in the village of Hall; commercial developments in Civic, Braddon, Manuka and Kingston; farm buildings; church halls; industrial and institutional buildings.<sup>12</sup>

Oliphant's more proficient designs prior to him designing a small number of 'functionalist' buildings was in the most part exploiting attributes of traditional English architecture, usually picturesque, incorporating various pitched tiled roof forms (often hipped roofs), rendered masonry walls, and orientation to the street frontage. Good examples of his early work include the "Dial" House, 2 Moresby Crescent, Red Hill, and the house at 9 Tennyson Crescent, Forrest, both in 1928.

The houses designed by Oakley and Parkes for the FCC influenced house designs in Canberra's inner suburbs during the 1930s. They were characterised by "Simplicity, good proportion, ...to obtain a pleasing effect in the external design of the house".<sup>13</sup> These houses frequently had elements of the Arts and Craft style and Mediterranean architecture, including arches, roughcast rendered walls, tiled roofs, exposed rafter ends, porches, timber shutters and tall chimneys. A number of Oliphant's house designs in the 1930s were similar to the houses design by his previous employer.

At the same time Oliphant started his private practice whole suburbs in Canberra were being developed with houses designed by the government architects Kirkpatrick, Murdoch and

Rolland, working within the FCC. These houses were brick cottages and concrete cottages and were also influenced by the Oakley and Parkes houses. Allied with this work were public and government buildings designed by the same government architects who were influenced by Hardy Wilson's Georgian Revival architecture in Sydney; Albert Hall, Yarralumla, and The Lodge, Deakin. The house Oliphant designed at 42 National Circuit, Forrest, 1927, was similarly influenced.<sup>14</sup>

Oliphant's experimentation with styles can be seen again where he produced possibly Canberra's best example of a Spanish Mission style house, "The Pines", 21 Furneaux Street, Forrest, 1929. The incorporation of this new style in Oliphant's work shows that he was aware of international developments, in this case the influence of trends in California, USA.<sup>15</sup>

Other than to be at the vanguard of design in Canberra, it is not clear as to why Oliphant chose to design 'Modern Movement' buildings in this short period of his work either side of WWII. It is clear from the house he designed in 1935 at 10 Farrer Street, Braddon, constructed in 1936, that he was at the very forefront of modern architectural design in Canberra. The house is most likely the first functionalist design in Canberra; Moir's own house being constructed in 1937. It may have been that since Malcolm Moir and Heather Sutherland, in partnership, and the government architect Cuthbert Whitley were also beginning to design in this new 'modern' style he chose to join them. In one particular case he may have competed with Moir and Sutherland, at Evans Crescent, Griffith. All but one of the houses between numbers 7 and 17 were designed by Moir and Sutherland, in the late 1930s; the residence in the middle of their houses, number 13, was designed by Oliphant in 1939; now extensively altered.<sup>16</sup>

There is at least one slightly altered, and there may have been more, modern houses Oliphant designed in Deakin.<sup>17</sup> The house at 4 Hotham Crescent was designed two years prior to the Arthur Circle house in 1938. It was rendered and painted white rather than being of the face aesthetic of the Arthur Circle house. It does not have the play of contrasting curved forms to the extent that the Arthur Circle house does. The house at 33 Elder Street Braddon, 1940, has the same face brick aesthetic as the Arthur Circle house but without the contrasting non-rectangular forms.

The contrasting curved forms that Oliphant incorporated in 24 Arthur Circle would appear to be unique in Canberra's functionalist architecture at this time. The Department of Works architects had designed a quarter curved wall and window for the entry to the Kingston Transport Depot (Bus Depot) administration wing, 1940, however, neither Moir and Sutherland nor Whitley introduced curved forms in their modern house designs other than curved concrete hoods over areas of glazing and entries, and curved brick detailing such as in chimneys.<sup>18</sup> The innovation shown by Oliphant in the design of the Arthur Circle house where the northeast protruding semi-circular corner window in the form of a masonry cylinder is placed into the cubic overall form of the house is rare in Australia. It can be compared with the much more grand Burnham Beeches, Sasafra Victoria by H A Norris, 1930. Here the curved glazed form of the lower level sunroom is placed under a curved balcony with a cubic form upper level. Other examples of the Inter-War Functionalist style in Australia have semicircular wings, however, the curve is continuous for the full height of the façade and not cut into the corner. The contrasting non-rectangular shape continued as a style element into the Late Twentieth-Century International style of architecture.<sup>19</sup>

The interiors of Oliphant's houses do not display an understanding of the 'open plan' that was an important component of the modern architecture being promoted by Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe in the second and third decade of the twentieth century. Oliphant was not alone in this, as Associate Professor Jennifer Taylor states in general for all of Australia, "Functionalism, as understood in the context of the Modern Movement, was not fully grasped. Even the stylistic characteristics of mainstream modern architecture rarely appeared as Australian buildings remained heavy and solid".<sup>20</sup> Oliphant's functionalist designs did, however, provide a flow of space between the living and dining rooms by including double door width openings. Some of Moir and Sutherland's houses of this period do show a slightly more developed understanding of the theories behind open planning with

their split-level designs at Evans Crescent and 43 Melbourne Avenue, however, the planning is still predominantly compartmentalised.<sup>21</sup>

At least three further buildings were designed by Oliphant in the functionalist style after WWII and are considered late examples of the style; the house at 1 Evans Crescent, 1947, (demolished); the house at 22 Dampier Crescent, Forrest, 1951, and the Business Premises of the Dairy Farmers Cooperative Milk Corporation, 1952.<sup>22</sup>

Of all Oliphant's buildings the most significant from an architectural and historic perspective are the functionalist style buildings he designed just before and at the start of WWII. These were innovative at that time, designed when the modern movement in Australia was just beginning; an architecture that experimented with form, free of historical references. Oliphant's buildings in the functionalist style that still exist include the house at 10 Farrer Street Braddon, 1936, the original section of the Canberra Milk Building, Griffith, 1937, the house at 4 Hotham Crescent, Deakin, 1938, the house at 33 Elder Street Braddon, 1940, and the house at 24 Arthur Circle. His other functionalist designs of this period have either been demolished or extensively altered beyond recognition, an example being the house at 13 Evans Crescent, Griffith, which has a Cape Cod upper level addition. Of those that do exist in an identifiable form it is readily apparent that there is an awareness of what was understood in Australia at that time to be 'modern' architecture, in their massing, three-dimensional expression and clean lines.

---

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The house at 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, was designed by Kenneth Oliphant in 1940 for Mr & Mrs J A Lea, construction being completed in 1940.<sup>23</sup> The building is an example of the Inter-War Functionalist Style (1915-40) with its asymmetrical massing, simple geometric shapes and roof concealed by parapet.<sup>24</sup>

The house is located centrally on the block and the site slopes down to the east towards Arthur Circle. A hedge extends across the street frontage. The front of the house with its play of forms can be viewed along the curve of the street.

The original house has been altered. The following describes the original house and then the changes to the house.

### Original House

The residence is a single storey near rectangular plan with a circular 'bay window' to the living room, a protruding half-circular corner window to the main bedroom, and small rectangular protrusion to the kitchen at the rear. The site plan exploits three-dimensional expression, incorporating asymmetrical massing and simple geometric shapes, and includes the original scale, form and fabric of the house. It is constructed of face brickwork with a metal deck roof concealed behind brick parapets.

The recessed central entry is approached up a few steps and past the curved front terrace. The entry is given prominence by the stepped shafted brick

corner treatment on the right side wall. The entry opens into a lobby with the living room to the left and the central perpendicular passage straight ahead.

The living room has an open fireplace, located centrally in the south wall, constructed of small narrow bricks in the Art Deco Style. To the left the 'bay window' opens out to the east onto the front curved terrace. The bay is formed by faceted glazing, consisting of two glass doors and two large sidelight double casement windows set under a curved flat concrete hooded roof. On the opposite side of the room, double doors opened into the dining room to the west.

The dining room has a fire place central to the south wall and a central window in the west wall that overlooked the rear garden.

The central passage extends from the dining room, at the south, to the bedrooms to the north, past the kitchen, laundry and bathroom.

The kitchen extends partially out to the west with a rear porch that opened out to the north. A separate lower level flat metal roof extended over both the kitchen and porch.

The main bedroom is located at the northeast end of the passage. It has a half-circular corner window with a radius of 1.5m located under a curved flat concrete roof. Its form protrudes from the corner of the room. Set below the sill were built-in window seats and under seat storage internally and curved brickwork externally.

The remainder of the residence had simple planning; the laundry and bathroom next to the kitchen on the west side and the other two bedrooms next to the main bedroom, one to the northwest and the other facing the street adjacent to the entry. The smaller front bedroom shares three symmetrical double-hung windows to the front façade with the main bedroom, two to the front bedroom and one to the main bedroom.

The external form is one of asymmetrical massing of simple geometric shapes constructed from light-toned face brickwork with the low pitched roof concealed by parapets.

The elegant curved forms along the front of the house contrast with the cubic massing of the dominant form of the house and the vertical expressed forms of the two south side chimneys. The main bedroom corner half circle is a remarkable play of volumes where the curve is not the full height of the building but is a half cylinder placed into the cubic form and allowed to protrude from the facade. This creates an element that has some technical complexity with the cantilevering concrete beams and has more in common with the constructivist forms than Art Deco where the full height of the wall would turn the corner.

The house is constructed of cavity brickwork with a low-pitched metal roof supported by timber framing. Reinforced concrete beams support the concrete hoods over the bay windows while a central steel post in the window frame to the main bedroom provides additional support to the concrete roof.



## Additions and Alterations

The house was extended to the rear in 1996 forming an “H” plan with a new family room connected to the middle of the rear of the original residence. The tie through from the original and up to the new extension replaces the original laundry. Three new bedrooms, wet areas and a store extend along the western wing off the new family room completing the “H” plan. The south side of the “H” is roofed to provide a double carport and a swimming pool is located in the north side overlooked from the new family room through extensive timber framed glazing. The pool is also accessed off the main bedroom through a door in the original western bedroom external wall.<sup>25</sup>

## Condition

The form of the original residence when viewed from Arthur Circle has in general been retained, however, the fabric has been altered. The exterior face brickwork has been rendered and painted; the protruding face brick parapet is also rendered. The internal alterations have compromised the original fabric and the southern extension has obscured the rear elevation, however, many of the internal walls remain and the functions of the original rooms essentially remain the same. The built-in seat and storage under the half-circle window have been removed, however, both fireplaces remain. The residence is well maintained and in good condition.

## Design Comments

The original scale form and fabric of the residence including its three dimensional expression, incorporation of simple shapes and asymmetrical massing are key architectural features of the property. Additional and significant architectural elements of the Inter-War Functionalist style (1915-40) exemplified by the building include:

- cantilevered hood;
- plain wall surfaces;
- half-circular corner and bay windows and dorrs;
- stepped shafted brickwork at entry;
- semi-circular wing, and
- rounded corner.<sup>26</sup>

The following features are also integral to the building's design: the curved front porch and stairs, the chimneys, the fenestration, original finishes and details. Further, the scale and form of the residence, including the open form of the entry and general view of the house from the street, are enhanced by the property's setting.

24 Arthur Circle can be compared with houses designed during the same period by the architecture firm of Moir and Sutherland and the government architects, notably Cuthbert Whitley. These houses include Malcolm Moir's own house at 43 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest, 1937, by Moir; the Evans Crescent Precinct (houses 7, 9, 11, 15 and 17), Griffith, 1938-40, by Moir & Sutherland; the former Forrest Fire Station Precinct, Forrest, 1939, by the government architect E H Henderson; the 'Whitley' single storey detached houses designed by the government architect Cuthbert Whitley in Kingston and Braddon, 1939-41.<sup>27</sup> (The comparison and contrast with places of a similar type will provide the necessary context and depth to assist in analysing the significance of the housing.)

These houses are Inter-War Functionalist style houses with asymmetrical massing which incorporate simple geometric shapes and roofs concealed by parapets. They were radical and progressive brick houses. While the privately commissioned housing was not as frugal as the government housing,

both the Moir houses and the Whitley designed government houses incorporated metal-framed windows, a specific style indicator, and corner windows an element of the style. Oliphant did not incorporate metal-framed windows in his designs preferring timber-framed windows.<sup>28</sup>

---

## STATEMENT ABOUT THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The house at 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, is an example of the earliest moves towards the introduction of modern architectural styles to Canberra. It is a relatively rare example of an early 1940s house and is illustrative of modern architecture. The curved street setting combines with the architecture to produce a place of integrity.

The house is important for its association with the introduction of modern architecture to Canberra prior to and at the beginning of WWII.

24 Arthur Circle exhibits the principal characteristics of modern residential architecture in a planned neighbourhood suburb; appropriate human scale and well sited. As a design in the Inter-war Functionalist style of architecture it has special interest in being one of the earliest in Canberra of this modern ideal by one of Canberra's important architects.

The house exhibits creative and artistic excellence as an entity possessing an architectural theme of modern architecture in European 'Modern Movement' principles. The house is aesthetically significant for its asymmetrical massing of simple geometric shapes free of decorative elements all expressed within a radical progressive image.

The place has been acknowledged as a distinctive example of architecture by professional bodies. It continues to fulfil its original purpose and its planning remains innovative and sound.

---

## ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Significance has been determined by research as accessed in the references below. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

- (a) it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches;**

The creativity of the architect Kenneth Oliphant is apparent in the design of the original house at 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, constructed in 1940, which was innovative when compared with other houses built in Australia in general and in Canberra in particular.

The house is of considerable architectural merit; the solution incorporating a radical form which includes geometric shapes and a flat roof concealed by parapets combined with clean lines, demonstrated an innovative architectural response to the needs of the 1930s-1940s domestic lifestyle.

The house exhibits creative design and artistic excellence by virtue of its architectural theme of modern architecture in what is an early interpretation of the European Modern Movement principles.

It is one of only four known surviving houses Oliphant designed in Canberra in this style prior to WWII, and is otherwise an accomplished early example of an Inter-War Functionalist style building in Canberra.

The design treatment of the 1996 extension, designed by architect D Boughton, was carefully composed with respect to its affect on the original structure; in all but the front raised path and curved wall being located behind the original house. The painted rendered wall finish is not similar to the original face brickwork but it is an element of the “functionalist” style.

**(b) it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group;**

The original house at 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, is a very good example of the Inter-War Functionalist style (1915-40). The building exhibits asymmetrical massing, simple geometric shapes and the roof is concealed by parapets. It is notable for displaying the design skill of the architect Kenneth Oliphant.

The following design features of the original house are of additional significance; the cantilevered hoods over the front façade glazing; semi-circular wing and rounded corner form of the northeast corner and the faceted living room glazing; the curved front porch and stairs; the two expressed chimneys, and original finishes and details.

The original house was carefully planned to exploit three-dimensional massing and express clean lines free of historical references. The alterations and extension have been carefully composed to not impact greatly on the original forms.

The house is a very good example of the architecture of Kenneth Oliphant, a renowned Canberra architect, and recognised for this by the RAIA ACT Chapter in the Register of Significant Twentieth Century Architecture. Oliphant is considered one of Canberra’s skilled interpreters of the ‘Modern Movement’ principles prior to WWII.

The examples of Inter-War Functionalist style architecture in Canberra that most closely compare with the Arthur Circle house are Malcolm Moir’s own house at 43 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest, 1937, by Moir; the Evans Crescent Precinct, Griffith, 1938-40, by Moir & Sutherland; the ‘Whitley’ single storey detached houses designed by the government architect Cuthbert Whitley in Kingston and Braddon, 1940-41. These houses are listed on the RAIA ACT Chapter Register of Significant Twentieth-Century Architecture. The house at 43 Melbourne Avenue, Forrest, is also listed on the RAIA National Heritage Register.

**(c) it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practised, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest;**

The Arthur Circle house is particularly interesting as it demonstrates a distinctive planning approach.

The planning of the house is of exceptional interest and displays an important development in architectural style between the Depression and the WWII, by contrast with traditional architectural styles. The planning innovations were based on the 1920s-30s European modern architecture that emphasised functional, clean lines and an aesthetic free of historical references.

Relatively few houses designed in the Inter-War Functionalist style were built in Canberra, and this was an early example of the style; only a small number of these still exist in a recognizable form.

**(d) it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations;**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(e) it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition**

This criterion is not applicable.

**(f) it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(g) it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind**

This place does not meet this criterion.

**(h) it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history**

The house is important for its special association with the introduction of modern architecture to Canberra, the twentieth century's most significant architecture; founded on functionalism and abstract painting. The earliest examples in Canberra are 10 Farrer Street, Braddon, built in 1936, designed by Kenneth Oliphant and 43 Melbourne Avenue, the architect Malcolm Moir's own house built in 1937.

The house is important for its association with Kenneth Oliphant. Oliphant played a significant role in the development of residential architecture in Canberra during the late 1920s through to the 1940s. Oliphant was one of Canberra's first independent practicing architects, if not the first, and was one of the most prolific architects to practise in Canberra. He played a leading role in introducing modern architecture to Canberra. This is an important work in his career and is one of only four remaining functionalist style houses he designed before WWII in Canberra. It has an association with him being his preferred choice of style at that time.

- (i) it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes**

This criterion is not applicable.

- (j) it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site**

The architecture of this residence has the potential to contribute to the education of students of architecture and may contribute to understanding early twentieth-century architectural styles. Experiencing heritage buildings enables the visitor to locate the building in its historical and environmental contexts. These experiences readily enable the establishment, understanding and interpretation of the building's heritage value and significance. This house is a very good example of mid-twentieth-century modern architecture, in this case an example of the Inter-war Functionalist style, based on a radical image of asymmetrical massing of simple geometric shapes free of decorative elements. Its innovative planning contributes to its significance and educational heritage.

- (k) for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements**

This criterion is not applicable.

- (l) for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:**
- (i) the life cycle of native species;**
  - (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;**
  - (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;**
  - (iv) distinct occurrences of species.**

This criterion is not applicable.

---

## **FEATURES INTRINSIC TO HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The features intrinsic to the heritage significance of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest and which require conservation comprise:

- Site planning where the house exploits three-dimensional expression, incorporating asymmetrical massing and simple geometric shapes, and including the original scale, form and fabric of the house. Specifically the low pitched roof concealed by parapets; simple cornices; cantilevered concrete hood; plain wall surfaces; half-circular corner and bay window and doors; the curved entry porch and stairs; the entry stepped shafted brickwork; the fenestration, and original detailing and finishes. (refer Note 1).

- The setting of the place that enables its scale and form to be appreciated including the open form of the entry and general view of the house from the street.

**Note 1:** “Original scale, form and fabric” shall mean that which was designed and built and is shown on the working drawing titled “Residence for J A Lea Esq Block 14 Section 44 Forrest dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1940, approval date stamped 3 7 1940 (by C S Daley) designed by Architect Kenneth H Oliphant. Planning Authority of the time “Plan No. 11349.”

---

## REASON FOR PROVISIONAL REGISTRATION

*24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance against 5 of the heritage criteria under the ACT Heritage Act.*

---

## APPLICABLE HERITAGE GUIDELINES

The Heritage Guidelines adopted under s27 of the *Heritage Act* 2004 are applicable to the conservation of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest.

The guiding conservation objective is that 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest, shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance and the features intrinsic to that heritage significance, and consistent with a sympathetic and viable use or uses. Any works that have a potential impact on significant fabric (and / or other heritage values) shall be guided by a professionally documented assessment and conservation policy relevant to that area or component (i.e. a Statement of Heritage Effects – SHE).

---

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 1. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Draft provisional registration entry was released for public comment on 12 April 2008 and period for public comment closes on 8 May 2008.

### 2. REFERENCES

- 1 *Canberra Times* 27 April 2005.
- 2 Reid, Paul 2002 *Canberra following Griffin A Design History of Australia's National Capital* National Archives of Australia.
- 3 A conversation with Mrs Lea, original owner of the house, in 1995.

- 4 ACTPLA Files & RSTCA. Moir's design for 7 Evans Crescent was delayed by the planning authorities CS Daley due to the steel spiral stair proposed adjacent to the front entry. In correspondence with the department Moir referred to European examples to support his design, however, after some delay Daley would not approve the plans with the stair and the house was constructed without the stair.
- 5 RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd).
- 6 ACTPLA, op cit. The plans approved did not show that the existing house was to be rendered and painted.
- 7 Compiled from Apperly, Richard, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds 1989 *Identifying Australian Architecture Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, Taylor, Jennifer 1990 *Australian Architecture Since 1960*, RAI, and RSTCA
- 8 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 9 Johnson, Donald Leslie 1980 *Australian Architecture 1901-1951 Sources of Modernism*, Sydney University Press.
- 10 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 11 RSTCA.
- 12 RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd), *Kenneth Oliphant His Life and Work*. 1996.
- 13 Charlton, Ken, Rodney Garnett Shibu Dutta, 2001 *Federal Capital Architecture Canberra 1911-1939*, National Trust of Australia.
- 14 Ibid, and RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd).
- 15 RSTCA
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 The extensively altered residence next door at 6 Hotham Crescent, may also have been designed by Oliphant; it exhibits similar elements of functionalist architecture, it is not included in the RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd).
- 18 RSTCA.
- 19 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 20 Taylor, op cit.
- 21 RSTCA
- 22 RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd).
- 23 ACTPLA Building File; Mrs Lea, op cit.
- 24 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 25 ACTPLA, op cit.
- 26 Apperly et al, op cit.
- 27 RSTCA.
- 28 RSCTA (Consultant Freeman Leeson Pty Ltd).

### **Other Information Sources**

RAIA ACT Chapter RSTCA Citation on 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest.

### **3. PHOTOGRAPHS AND PLANS**

**Figure 1. Front view of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest.**



([www.canberrahouse.com/houses/1930s-1940s/24-arthur-circle-forrest-1939/](http://www.canberrahouse.com/houses/1930s-1940s/24-arthur-circle-forrest-1939/))



**Figure 2. Location of 24 Arthur Circle, Forrest.**

