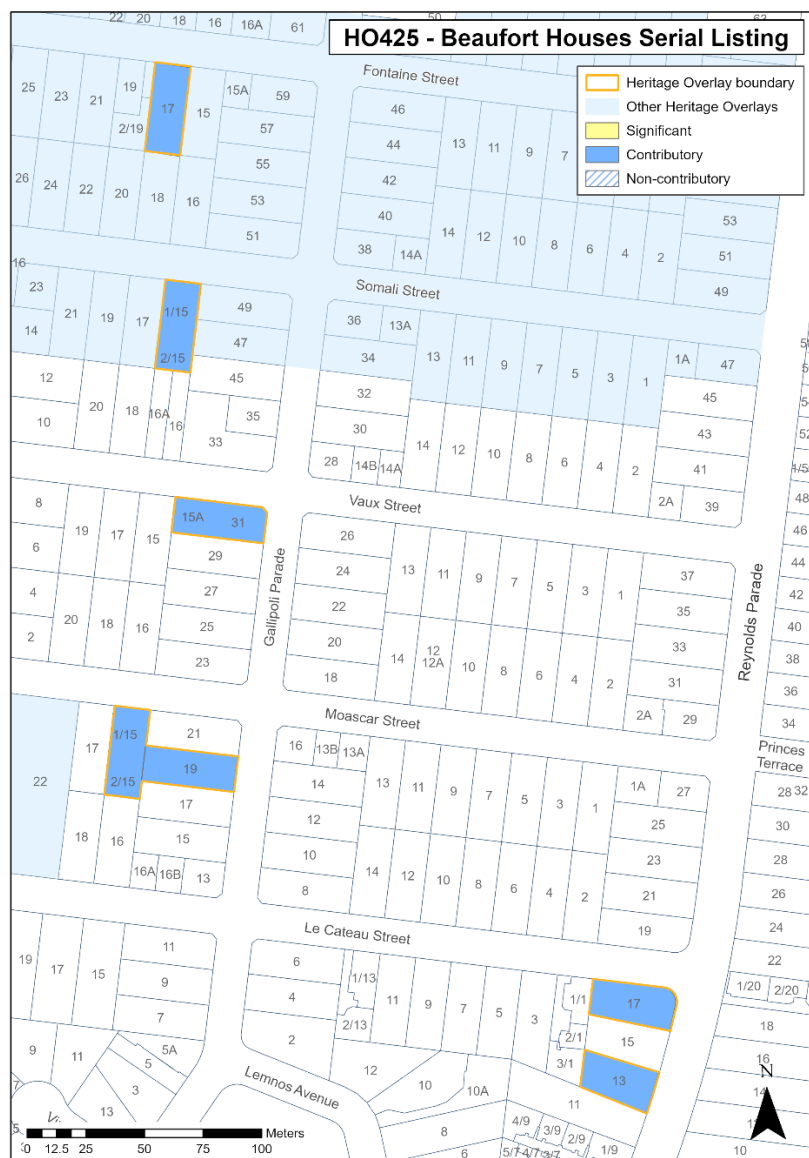


HO425 – Beaufort Houses Serial Listing Citation

Place Name	Beaufort Houses
PS ref No	HO425
Place Type	Serial Listing
Architectural Style	Postwar Period (1945-1965)
HERMES No	154913

Curtilage Map



Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The 'Beaufort' steel house project was a joint State and Federal government initiative to solve the severe housing shortage experienced in Australia after World War II. The manufacture of pre-fabricated houses using factory techniques was identified as one method of overcoming problems associated with lack of skilled tradespeople to build houses and the Beaufort house was specifically designed to provide a peacetime function for aircraft factories set up during the war. The Beaufort house was one of the first pre-fabricated housing types to be developed and at peak production it was anticipated that 3000 Beaufort homes per year could be produced. However, the project was continually delayed and eventually cancelled due to shortages of steel. As a result only 58 Beaufort houses were built in Victoria and at least half of these were erected in the West Coburg Estate in late 1947 and 1948. Today, the following examples survive relatively intact:

- 17 Fontaine Street,
- 19 & 31 Gallipoli Parade,
- 15 Moascar Street,
- ~~7,~~ 13 & 17 Reynolds Parade, and
- 15 Somali Street
- ~~15 Vaux Street~~

The relatively high external integrity of most of the Beaufort houses listed above is an important aspect of their significance and the context of the houses, in proximity to one another amongst other houses built by the War Service Homes Commission is also significant.

By comparison two other surviving examples at 13 Moascar Street and 5 Vaux Street have been significantly altered and are not significant. Non-original alterations and additions to the Beaufort houses and outbuildings are also not significant.

How is it significant?

The Beaufort Houses are of local historic, architectural and technical significance to the City of Merri-bek and potentially to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the Beaufort houses are significant as evidence of the important role of the War Service Homes Commission in the provision of affordable housing after the Second World War. They are historically significant as evidence of the experimental housing programs developed by the Commission to meet severe housing shortages after World War Two and are of particular significance as one of the first examples of a joint State-Federal housing programme. Only a small number of these houses were constructed, and this group represents the majority of the known surviving examples in Victoria. The houses also have important associations with the architect, A.R. Baldwinson, who is credited with the design. (Criteria A, B & H)

The Beaufort houses are historically and technically significant for the innovative method of construction, which demonstrates how factory techniques developed during wartime were adapted to peacetime initiatives. Although the house did not proceed to full production the knowledge gained through its design and development informed the development of other types of prefabricated housing. (Criteria A & F).

Grading schedule

Address	Grade
17 Fontaine Street	Contributory
19 Gallipoli Parade	Contributory
31 Gallipoli Parade	Contributory
15 Moascar Street	Contributory
13 Reynolds Parade	Contributory
17 Reynolds Parade	Contributory

Historical Notes

Thematic History Key theme

Theme 6: Building Moreland's Houses

Thematic History Key sub-theme

Sub-theme 6.4 Building houses in the twentieth century

This precinct comprises seven surviving and relatively intact Beaufort prefabricated steel houses constructed for the War Service Homes Commission in the West Coburg Estate in late 1947 and 1948.

War Service Homes Commission

Due to a shortage of houses after the First World War the Commonwealth Government created the War Service Homes Commission in 1919 to assist returned soldiers and their families to buy affordable houses. War service homes were intended by the Government as "the counterpoint to the land settlement portion of the repatriation policy" ('WSH Jubilee', p.1), a policy commonly known as soldier settlement. Assistance for war service homes was given through low interest rate loans to purchase existing houses, but by the early 1920s the focus of the Commission shifted to the construction of new houses - a measure 'designed to help solve, and not accentuate the national housing problem' (The Argus, 18 January, 1921).

The Commission intended to buy large tracts of land and contract builders to erect the houses, however due to difficulty engaging contractors and finding sufficient material cheaply, the Commission was the builder for its first two years of operations. Initially, the houses were constructed using day labour, but by 1921 the Commission began to contract out its building operations ('WSH Jubilee', pp.4-7). The houses built by the Commission from 1919-22 were designed under the direction of their principal architect, Mr. E.R. Bradshaw (The Argus, 20 December 1919). However, in mid-1922 the Commission reached an agreement with the State Savings Bank of Victoria (SSBV) that the bank would, out of moneys made available by the commissioner, provide homes upon the same terms and conditions as provided by the Commission. By 1927 the SSBV had assumed responsibility for all of the dwellings built by the bank for returned soldiers and other persons eligible under the original War Services Homes Act and at least until 1940 all new war service homes in Victoria were designed and built by the SSBV (The Argus, 27 July 1922, 24 September 1929; 'WSH Jubilee').

Australia's first war service homes were completed in the Sydney suburb of Canterbury in September 1919 ('WSH Jubilee', p.5) and Victoria's first war service homes were constructed in Preston soon afterward. The Preston houses were commenced late in 1919 and were occupied by May 1920. By 1921 the Commission had constructed over 600 homes in Victoria in suburbs such as Preston, Northcote, Kew and Camberwell and Williamstown and country towns including Wonthaggi, Castlemaine and Seymour and in the decade to 1929 constructed over 20,000 homes throughout Australia of which about 4000 were in Victoria ('WSH Jubilee', p.10). The Commission continued to play an important role in the provision of housing for returned servicemen well into the 1960s ('WSH Jubilee', p.29).

Development of the West Coburg Estate 1919-1929

In 1920 the Commission acquired 12 hectares of land west of Reynolds Parade (LV). The streets were renamed to recall the glory of the first AIF campaigns, including Gallipoli, Somali, Perrone, Gezireh, Moascar, Heliopolis and Lemnos and 144 houses were constructed by the SSBV on behalf of the Commission in what became known as the West Coburg Estate. Almost 100 houses, constructed to one of 30 standard designs used by the SSBV, had been completed by the end of 1926 and the balance was completed soon after (Broome, 1991:208, RB, SM; The Argus, 18 January, 1924, 30 November 1926). It is thought that local builder and land developer Robert Irvine, best known for his construction of the Nicholson Street tram sheds, built many of the houses in this area (Broome, 1991:208).

Construction throughout Coburg almost ceased during the Depression of the early 1930s and it appears that no further development occurred in the estate until after World War II.

Development of the West Coburg estate 1946-1960

The second stage of development within the West Coburg Estate began in 1945 when the Commission re-commenced land sales. The majority of the remaining vacant lots were sold off by 1955 and unlike the previous stage when all the lots were transferred first to the SSBV (who constructed the houses) and later (once the houses were built) to individual owners, this time lots were sold off individually with most of the owners immediately taking out a mortgage to the Commission to finance construction of a house (LV).

However, development of the estate was curtailed by another housing shortage that followed the end of World War II. The situation was made worse by a shortage of materials and the absence of a skilled workforce. In the year ended June 1946 the Commission received nearly 14,500 applications, but only 576 homes were built. As a result, throughout 1946-49 there was:

Considerable experimentation and improvisation in order to overcome the shortages of building materials and professional staff and the reluctance of builders to tender for the erection of homes. ('WSH Jubilee', p.23)

In order to accelerate the provision of homes the Commission decided to enact a 'special advance scheme' whereby applicants were permitted to make their own arrangements for building homes using their own architect and builder ('WSH Jubilee', p.1). Other initiatives to address the shortfall were the Group building program and development of pre-fabricated and factory built house types.

The Group Building program - that is, the building of groups of houses rather than individually - was launched in 1947-48 and while initial progress was slow (in the first two years only 222 homes were built throughout Australia) it laid the foundation for a bigger group building programme in later years and approximately 10,000 homes were completed over the next decade ('WSH Jubilee', p.21). In the West Coburg area tenders were called by the Commission in late 1947 and early 1948 for 50 war service homes to be constructed 'on the group principle' (The Argus, 23 September 1947). The tenders specified both brick and timber houses.

Meanwhile, the pre-fabricated houses developed by the Commission in the immediate post-war years included what was known as the Beaufort steel house, as well as a pre-cast concrete factory-produced house and a factory-built weatherboard house. The development of the Beaufort house combined the skills of the Victorian Housing Commission, the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing (which by then incorporated the War Services Homes Commission) and the technical staff of the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production including the architect Arthur Baldwinson who is credited with the design. To promote the scheme a prototype was erected in the Fitzroy Gardens, which was opened to the public on 4 June 1946 and orders were eventually placed by the Victorian State Government and the War Service Homes Commission for 5000 houses each (The Argus, 11 February 1947). At peak production it was anticipated that 3000 homes per year could be produced. However, the project was continually delayed and eventually cancelled as a result of shortages of steel.

Apart from the Fitzroy Gardens prototype the first Beaufort houses in Victoria were erected in Bluff Road, Sandringham and Ballarat Road, Braybrook for the Housing Commission of Victoria. The tenants of these houses moved in by April 1947 (The Argus, 3 April 1947). However, progress was still slow and by September 1947 only a 'trickle' of houses (all built to the same standard 2 bedroom design known as 'Type 1') had been produced, which were mostly erected in War Service Homes or Housing Commission of Victoria estates at Maidstone, Spotswood and West Coburg. About 20 houses had been erected by November and one house at West Coburg was intended as a demonstration home to be occupied by an ex-serviceman at a 'nominal rental on condition that he keeps the house open for inspection by prospective buyers at certain hours' (The Sun, 6 September 1947; The Herald, 14 November 1947).

Finally, in December 1947 the State Government decided to cancel the Beaufort Scheme. The reason given was the lack of supply of steel - it was noted that one Beaufort house would use the same amount of steel as used in seven ordinary houses and would thus delay the construction of other housing (The Argus, 9 December 1947). The announcement by the State Government was followed by a similar decision of the Chifley Federal Government to cancel the Beaufort Homes project and to 'discontinue their production for Commonwealth use'. Beaufort homes 'then under construction and those on which deposits had been paid' would be completed (The Argus, 12 February 1948). Newspaper reports indicate that 58 Beaufort houses were under construction when the project was suspended (The Age, 19 March 1949) and about 20-30 of these were built in the West Coburg area between late 1947 and early 1949.

For example, one of the first Beaufort houses was erected at 35 Gallipoli parade in December 1947 (this has since been demolished) while the nearby example at 31 Gallipoli Parade (still extant) was erected by February 1948. The first owners of the latter house were John and Hazel Whimpey, who also operated a shop from the rear of the site [1]. The Beaufort house at 17 Fontaine Street was one of the last to be completed - it does not appear in the rate books until late 1948 or early 1949 (RB, LV).

In 1991 at least 23 Beaufort houses still survived (Hubbard, 1991), however, since then at least 14 have been demolished and in 2012 only nine examples were still extant.

The demise of the Beaufort house project was lamented in 1949 by none other than Robin Boyd, then director of the Age Small Homes Service. He noted that had the project been allowed to continue it would have by then been producing 14 houses a day and up to 3000 would have been built. In his opinion the Beaufort house was:

.. a well designed unit in an excellently planned production machine. It was a challenge. It showed how the housing shortage could be tackled and beaten by modern industrial methods... (The Age, 19 March 1949, '14 Invisible houses a day, a lament on an anniversary')

Description

The Beaufort Houses precinct comprises the following properties [2]:

- 17 Fontaine Street
- 19 & 31 Gallipoli Parade
- 15 Moascar Street
- 7, 13 & 17 Reynolds Parade
- 15 Somali Street
- 15 Vaux Street

The Beaufort Houses precinct comprises the seven surviving relatively intact examples of the approximately 23 Beaufort houses constructed by the War Service Homes Commission in the West Coburg Estate in 1947-48. As noted in the History, at least 14 Beaufort houses have been demolished, while two other surviving examples have been significantly altered and are not included in the precinct. Of the seven intact examples, two are situated within the HO80 precinct (17 Fontaine and 15 Somali), while the remaining five are situated in the streets immediately to the south of the HO80 precinct- 19 & 31 Gallipoli Parade, 15 Moascar Street, and 13 & 17 Reynolds Parade.

The Beaufort houses were all built to a standard two-bedroom house design based on a three-foot grid. They are built entirely of steel with framing, cladding and roofing all of metal. The wall cladding is joined by vertical joiner strips at three foot intervals and the windows were designed in the same modular format. Where wider windows were required, multiples of the standard module were placed together. The plans were designed with a compact use of space, with minimal passage areas, however despite this economy of scale the construction system was a demanding one using a lot of steel, which ultimately led to the cancellation of the program as noted in the History. The roof was designed as a low pitch gable and generally the houses were oriented with the gable end towards the street.

Framing consisted of vertical, horizontal and corner elements bolted together. Flanges were used to re-inforce corners, especially at the top of walls where the rafters would be supported. Even the floor joists were all steel. The Beaufort houses were sophisticated designs using innovative technology learnt from the aviation industry. Even today the prefabricated technology applied to the design and construction of the Beaufort houses is difficult to achieve.

Beaufort houses were designed as modern homes and particular attention was paid to light and ventilation. Windows were wide opening casements in steel frames. A glass porch was a feature of the front elevation, as was landscaping that included (in the prototype) rock walling to the base of the walls. This had the effect of 'anchoring' the house to its site and making the house and landscape part of an integrated design. The chimney was a small tapered cylinder flue also made of steel, and is a distinctive shape. According to original brochures [2] produced for the house the original interiors were devoid of decoration and in the modern style with built-in kitchens, laundries and bathrooms providing a level of comfort and convenience.

Many of the surviving Beaufort houses retain much of their original appearance, and as a group tend to have had few alterations and additions.

Comparisons

This area contains the largest number of surviving Beaufort houses in Victoria, and probably Australia. As such, the surviving houses, as a group, are of potential State and possible National significance as evidence of the program. As noted in the history, of the 23 Beaufort houses constructed in the West Coburg estate at least half have been demolished, and there are no other known examples elsewhere in Moreland. The importance of the surviving houses is therefore enhanced by their rarity value.

Of the surviving nine Beaufort houses (which are all of identical original design) the two within HO80 (15 Somali Street and 17 Fontaine Street) as well as five in surrounding streets (19 & 31 Gallipoli Parade, 15 Moascar Street, 13 & 17 Reynolds Parade) remain relatively intact externally and represent the best examples. The other two surviving Beaufort houses - 13 Moascar St and 5 Vaux St - have been more significantly altered and do not meet the threshold of local significance.

Other known examples within Melbourne include 4 & 8 and 100 Suffolk Street in Maidstone and 55 Reed Street and 3 Arras Street in Spotswood. These are also within former War Service Homes estates. They are not included in the heritage overlay.

* When originally assessed in 2010 this precinct also included Beaufort houses at 7 Reynolds Parade and 15 Vaux Street, however, these houses were subsequently demolished by 2012 when Amendment C129 was placed on exhibition.

Construction

Arthur Baldwinson

Circa 1947 - 1948

Recommended Management

Conservation guidelines (General)

Please refer to the Heritage Local Policy in the Moreland Planning Scheme (Clause 22.13 or as amended) for the heritage management guidelines for this precinct.

Conservation guidelines (Specific)

The following specific guidelines apply to this precinct:

- Because of the rarity of the Beaufort houses, complete demolition of any house is strongly discouraged.
- Relocation on the same site may be considered if it will assist in the conservation of the Beaufort house. For example, by enabling the Beaufort house to be retained and incorporated into a multi-dwelling development.
- Relocation to another site may only be considered as an option of last resort. If this is to be considered relocation to another site within the boundaries of the West Coburg Estate (i.e. generally within the area bounded by Bell Street, Reynolds Parade, Reynard Street and Mitchell Parade, Pascoe Vale) is the preferred option, while a site within Moreland municipality is a second option. If the house is relocated consideration should be given to transferring the HO to the new site. Relocation to a site outside of Moreland municipality may be considered only as a last resort and after consideration of all other options of conserving the house.
- Additions to a Beaufort House should be visually recessive and not dominate the heritage place
- It is not essential for additions to be fully concealed from view, however, alterations or additions to the front or side elevations should be avoided.
- Multi-dwelling developments may be considered where the existing dwelling is retained and conserved.
- New front fences should be not more than 1 metres in height or there should be no front fence.

Planning Scheme Controls

External paint controls	Yes
Internal alteration controls	No
Tree controls	No
Solar energy system	Yes
Outbuildings or fences not exempt	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No
Incorporated Plan	Heritage Exemptions Incorporated Plan



17 Fontaine street



19 Gallipoli Parade



31 Gallipoli Parade



31 Gallipoli Parade



15 Moascar Street



13 Reynolds Parade

Image



17 Reynolds Parade



15 Somali Street

Relevant Heritage Studies

Gallipoli Parade Heritage Precinct & Beaufort Houses - Review of heritage significance, Context Pty Ltd, 2013 Amendment C129	15 Somali Street, 15 Moascar Street, 17 Fontaine Street, - o 19, 31 Gallipoli Parade - o 13, 17 Reynolds Pde
2023 Heritage Review (Heritage Assortment Project)	Update to the description of HO425 – Beaufort Houses type in the schedule to Clause 43.01 to a Serial Listing Update citation to include a grading schedule in the statement of significance.

References

Sources

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- [2] Beaufort Homes. Individually styled modern designs', 1946 brochure prepared by the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production, viewed online (November 2010) at http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/society_art/modern/beaufort/index.html
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