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Typological Study Half-Houses of St Albans Brimbank City Council, August 2020 V.1



Back yard scene with clothes line Fox Street St Albans



W Czernik entertaining children on a motorcycle, 1950s

This typological study has been undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter adopted by Australia ICOMOS

**This document has been written and researched by
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background, Brief and Methodology

This typological study was commissioned by Brimbank City Council to document the history and cultural significance of the half-houses of St Albans, analysing the values of the half-houses.

This study arose from a proposed Planning Scheme Amendment C200, to place the Grand Junction and Mathews Hill precincts on the Heritage Overlay Schedule. The Amendment included a half-house located at 108 George Street, St Albans. Following exhibition, Council split the amendment and abandoned C200 Part 1, which included 108 George Street, St Albans and resolved to undertake a study of the half-houses. Council commissioned heritage ALLIANCE in January 2019 to undertake the half-house study.

The Council report outlined the reasoning behind the abandoning of the amendment:

Whilst initial analysis identified that the Half House, located at 108 George Street, St Albans, is considered to be of local significance, further studies including onsite analysis have revealed significant alterations. Whilst it is not uncommon for properties to be altered over time, the question is whether the degree of alterations makes the origins, and thus the heritage significance of the property unrecognisable.

In comparison with individually 'significant' places in the City of Brimbank, its intactness is very low. An analysis then of what would be protected in the proposed Heritage Overlay identifies only its diminutive size and large setback from the street. Given the limitations of what can be protected it is considered in this case, the Heritage Overlay does not appear to be the best tool with which to recognise the historic significance of this half house, and the half house phenomenon in St Albans more generally.

The rarity of stand-alone half houses makes these types of examples ...significant. However the recognition that there are a number that exist, albeit in an altered form and given the history that surrounds these types of dwellings some form of analysis or assessment is still recommended, this however would not be in the form of a Heritage Overlay.

To ensure the important history is recorded for future generations it is considered that Council should undertake a Half House Typological Study.

This study does not aim to make a heritage assessment of the half-houses for the purposes of application of the Heritage Overlay, but it necessarily uses the language and tools of heritage assessment. It aims to document why the half-houses became historically and socially necessary and why there was a particular confluence of factors that led to the half-houses becoming so ubiquitous in post-war St Albans. The study documents different groups of half-houses as they exist today and provides mapping of where half-houses can be identified

The study has made use of numerous sources including the report, *Victoria's Post 1940s Migration Heritage*, August 2011, for City of Darebin and Heritage Victoria. The study has been informed by the *Victorian Framework of Historic Themes* and the following historic themes which were identified in the *City of Brimbank Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study Environmental History*, of 2000. These have been expanded to develop the half-house theme in more detail.

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes

2.4 Migrating and making a home

6. Building towns, cities and the garden State

6.7 Making homes for Victorians

1.2 Sources

The consultants drew extensively on published histories of St Albans, oral history of local residents and personal photos published on local websites. Some oral histories were collected and transcribed by Lorna Cameron and other volunteers of the Tin Shed, St Albans Youth Community Centre, during a community project undertaken in 1985.

Many of these oral histories have been published in sources including *St Albans Secondary College Celebrating 60 years*, *Stories about St Albans*, and *Bungalows of St Albans*. For the 1985 project the volunteers had some training provided to them by professional historians. In 2004, many of these interviews were published in *St Albans Oral History from the Tin Shed Archives*, edited by Joseph Ribarow. These were published in the form of the original transcription, with clear question and answer responses. Some of these 1985 interviews have been used in Ribarow's recent 2018 *Bungalows of St Albans*, but the transcription has been edited and transcribed in the first person. Later sources include interviews undertaken by Joseph Ribarow between 2000-2016. Photos in this publication were collected either by Ribarow or Kon Haumann, from individuals contacted by them for interviews. [Personal Comm. Joseph Ribarow, 2019]

As part of the half-houses project, Brimbank City Council undertook community engagement during Spring 2019. This included a drop-in session at St Albans library, requests for information on Council's Facebook and webpages and articles in local newspapers. The community responses included four online forms, one letter, eight Facebook messages, seven face-to-face responses at the St Albans library, three phone messages and two hard copy forms submitted at St Albans library. The comments and issues raised in the consultation were compiled and addressed by Council staff during the course of the study. Photos provided to Council were only used when permission was sought directly from the respondents. The measured drawings and photos of 59 George Street was done with the kind permission of Mr and Mrs J Attard.

A note on terminology:

The expression, *half-house* appears to have developed in more recent times to describe these small houses. The terminology used in oral history varies from one person to another. Many of the owners of these houses used interchangeable terms including bungalow, part-house, shack, sleep-out and the Council called them either temporary or part-houses. The term half-houses has been used here as it was the term adopted by the *City of Brimbank Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study Environmental History* in 2000 and has been used by Council when describing these housing forms in St Albans. As a descriptive term, it is probably the best way to describe and name these houses as it provides clarity that we are referring to an unfinished construction that the term bungalow does not. The word bungalow, is used most often in the oral histories, but this is because the local real estate agents were using this term to up-sell what was in effect an unfinished shack. Many people purchased a 'bungalow and land' from an agent, and this name then stuck. Outside of the post-war St Albans community however, the term bungalow has a very different meaning and it is not a correct description of the half-houses in the Australian context.

The word bungalow is derived from *bangla*, meaning a Bengali house. In the early days of the British Raj in India, a bungalow was understood to be a single-storey house with commodious verandahs, but by the end of the nineteenth century the word was being loosely applied, especially in America, to many kinds of houses that catered for a relatively casual lifestyle and had easy access to the outdoors. The term was then loosely applied in Australia to Federation period houses of masonry with large pitched, tile roof forms and verandahs. [Apperly, 1989:144]

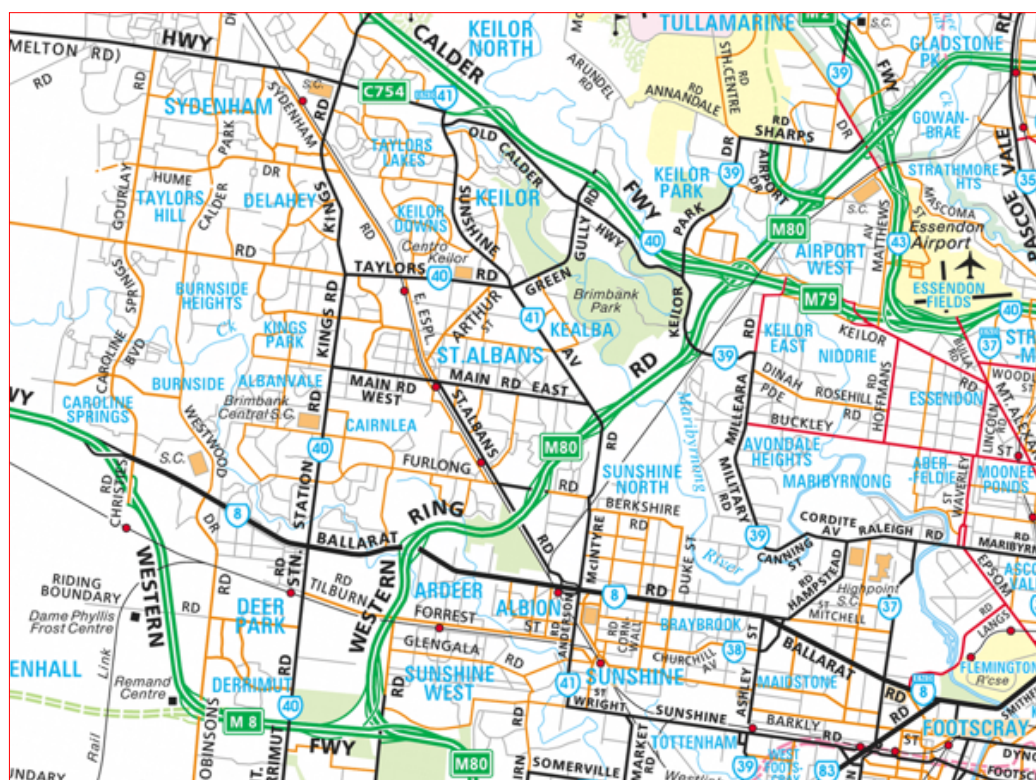


Figure 1 Location plan of St Albans, in Western Suburbs of Melbourne, Source, Melways online 2019

1.3 Study Team

The study team who prepared this report comprised:

Sera-Jane Peters Heritage Planner and Historian
 David Wixted Architect

1.4 Copyright

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1.5 Acknowledgements

The study team would like to thank the following people for contributing to the information presented in this report:

Joseph Ribarow
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 Maureen Kavanagh
 Sarma Tusek
 Peter Bobek
 John Ibic

2.0 CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

2.1 Introduction

St Albans is a small suburb, 12 kilometres to the west of Melbourne, in the City of Brimbank. It is located within the country of the Wurundjeri people of the Woiwurrung language group, who have lived in this country and cared for it, for over 40,000 years.

St Albans is bisected by the Bendigo railway line, which was the impetus for the establishment of a township in the 1880s. Until the 1940s, St Albans remained a sparsely populated farming community of a few hundred people. The area was marginal farm land that had been subdivided into township allotments in the land boom of the 1880s, by speculators who sold a few lots and then disappeared in the 1890s crash. These early subdivision patterns and street names, were then resurrected in the next land boom of the 1950s and 60s.

The aerial photo below, from 1951, shows St Albans as a scattered farming community centred on the railway station, with unpaved roads leading to larger farms further north. At the centre of the town is the railway station, and the level crossing at Main Road, still called Main Road East and Main Road West. The town has a distinctive circular township plan which lies on both sides of the railway. The aerial shows, to the east of the township, the first development of un-serviced allotments with new houses, and goat tracks leading across paddocks. At the start of the 1950s, sleepy St Albans was set to become the newest suburb of Melbourne, attracting thousands of new migrants and growing from a population of a few hundred to 7,000 by 1958.

[\[https://www.historyofstalbans.com/history.html\]](https://www.historyofstalbans.com/history.html)



Figure 2 Aerial photo of St Albans 1951. Source, Landata

The rapid rise in Victoria's European migrant population is revealed in Victorian census data which recorded 155,690 residents born in Europe in 1947, and 519,626 residents born in Europe in 1961. St Albans attracted migrants from countries impacted by the Second World War, and a large proportion of these were refugees and displaced persons. These new residents saw the local primary school balloon in numbers, and when *The Argus* newspaper visited in 1956, they found 80 percent of the children were new migrants. In the fourth grade only 8 had been born in Australia, the reporters found children from Greece, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Russia, Lithuania, Yugoslavia, Holland, Belgium, Scotland, England, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Ukraine and Czechoslovakia. [*The Argus*, Friday 27 July, 1956. P5]

2.2 Post-war housing crisis in Australia

In the mid-1940s, Australia faced a significant housing crisis, brought on by a slowed rate of supply of housing during the 1930s depression and the Second World War. With an expected increase in migration and demobilisation of the armed forces in the post-war period, housing provision became a major social and political issue. By 1942, housing was seen as one of the main pillars of post-war reconstruction and there was public expectation that the Menzies government would step in and solve what appeared to be a looming crisis. In response, the Commonwealth Housing Commission was appointed to investigate housing in Australia. Their final report delivered in 1944, found that there would be an estimated shortfall of 300,000 homes in 1945. The estimate of the number of homes to be built each year in order to service the current and future requirements of returned servicemen and new migrants, was 40,000 houses per year. In addition to a critical shortfall in housing, there was also 137,000 sub-standard dwellings currently being occupied by families and in 1947 it was found that there was only 877 dwellings for every 1000 households. In spite of Government reports, papers, meetings and conferences addressing the issue of the housing shortage, in 1945-46 the total number of houses constructed, was only 25,000, well below the estimated 40,000 needed to meet demand. [Dingle1999:344]

The housing crisis in 1944 was one of availability rather than affordability, but by 1951 this had changed. The shortfall in housing was due to a number of factors, the lack of building activity during the 1930s, material shortages during the war and until 1955, labour shortages and a failure of government policy. There was also a social change in the post-war period, that saw returning soldiers and migrant families preference new outer suburban homes rather than rentals in the overcrowded inner city. The cost of building in the post-war period rose at a rate of 10% per year. The average five room brick cottage cost £1200 in 1939 and the costs had risen to over £3000 by 1951. [Boyd, 1968:115]

For many wage earners, the cost of buying a house had risen to four times their annual income and it was an inferior product to that which was the average home pre-depression. The size of houses had to be reduced, ornament and decoration was unavailable or exorbitant and the internal arrangement of smaller and smaller rooms became reduced. Five rooms was reduced to four and features such as separate dining or living rooms became a thing of the past. In 1939 the average house occupied 1500 sq ft and in 1950 it was less than a 1000.

Disillusioned and frustrated at every turn, hundreds of people turned to the task of building for themselves. Books and correspondence courses and exhibitions taught amateurs how to do it. By 1951, it was estimated that one in every three new houses was being built by its owner. [Boyd,1968:117-118]

With the rapid onset of migration in 1949, migrant hostels were set up to provide temporary accommodation for displaced persons and assisted northern European and British migrants. In 1950, 153,685 migrants arrived in Australia with promises of housing and jobs when they arrived. The migrant hostels were controlled by the Commonwealth and in Melbourne the hostels were mostly Nissen and Quonset huts, prototype buildings, army huts or converted wool stores built in the 1940s. Through the 1950s and 1960s they provided accommodation for between 500 and 1500 residents at a time, with a maximum stay of twelve months. Located in industrial or outer suburbs - Altona, Broadmeadows, Brooklyn, Fishermans Bend, Holmesglen, Maribyrnong, Nunawading and Preston - their plainly furnished rooms, communal washing and eating facilities provided little privacy. With rent

frequently amounting to 80% of a migrant's income, protests, including a number of rental 'strikes', were frequent. [Victoria's Post 1940s Migration Heritage, 2011:21]



Figure 3 Children in front of migrant huts at Bonegilla, 1949. Source, National Archives of Australia, A12111,1/1949/22/20.

The difficulties associated with accommodation standards and costs at the migrant hostels and the lack of other rental options, propelled many migrants into the housing market within 12 months of their arrival. With little opportunity to save money, reliant on word of mouth and co-operative assistance, and following the impulse to congregate with people who shared culture and language, many migrants moved directly from hostels to blocks of empty land in outer suburbs like St Albans.

2.3 New attitudes to housing

The historical context of the development of half-houses in St Albans was an era of post-war reconstruction, with housing availability impacted by migration and demobilisation, material shortages and changing government policy on housing. To address the crisis in building material availability, the Department of Post-War Reconstruction was planning for the release of 45,000 men from the defence forces to work in the building industry, in 1944. In December 1948, displaced persons were making up for the lack of workers in the building industry with 13,000 being employed, in brick, tile, cement and timber industries. Many of these same industries were located in Melbourne's western suburbs and were the workplaces of many of St Albans' half-house owners. [Land of Opportunity: Australia's post-war reconstruction; <http://guides.naa.gov.au/land-of-opportunity/chapter15/index.aspx>]

The social context of the development of half-houses in St Albans, was a changing sense of the nuclear family and the ways and means to house that unit in a single storey house on a private allotment. Behind the move to private housing in the suburbs, was a government which actively encouraged private home ownership through a multitude of social and economic policies. Prime Minister Robert Menzies summarised his government's thinking about home ownership in a speech which is now known as *The Forgotten People* speech of 22 May 1942.

The material home represents the concrete expression of the habits of frugality and saving "for a home of our own". Your advanced socialist may rave against private property even while he acquires it; but one of the best instincts in us is that which induces us to have one little piece of earth with a house and garden which is ours, to which we can withdraw, in which we can be amongst our friends, into which no stranger can come against our will...National patriotism, in other words, inevitably springs from the

instinct to defend and preserve our own homes. [<https://menziesvirtualmuseum.org.au/transcripts/the-forgotten-people/59-chapter-1-the-forgotten-people/>]

It was the Menzies government, later in the 1950s and 1960s that provided commonwealth housing subsidies to young married couples, and housing loans insurance to insure approved lenders against loss, by Government guarantee. Menzies and the Liberal Party he led, held firm to the idea of private home ownership as virtuous and a clear expression of moral rectitude. The fact that new migrants were not provided with adequate government accommodation, that there was inadequate rental and public housing available, and that migrant hostels were so uncondusive to family life, drove migrants to become part of Menzie's plan for a society of mortgaged patriots.

According to Professor Graeme Davison, in the 1960s, Melbourne came closer to realising the suburban dream than at any other moment in its history. Davison states that the suburban way of life was something more than a defensive reaction to the ills of industrialism or the terrors of war; it was the material expression of an expansive, property-owning, family-centred, pleasure-loving democracy. [Davison, G. 2008 Suburbs and Suburbanisation, in e-Melbourne the city past and present <http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EMO1440b.htm>]

There were many reasons why newly arrived European migrants embraced this suburban dream in Melbourne's outer suburbs, with lack of housing choice and housing affordability being the primary push factors. There were also very strong pull factors, like the need to be with people who had similar backgrounds and experiences, the need to be settled after years of war and displacement, and the opportunity provided by a new community to establish a fresh beginning. The increasing numbers of migrant home-owners settling in St Albans in the post-war period then, was not unique, but was a product of government policy, historical circumstance and social choice. What was unique in St Albans was the expression of this confluence of factors in a small, temporary, affordable shelter they called bungalows. These temporary houses could be seen as just another means of providing affordable housing at a time of crisis, but it was far more complex than this, as it had its own cultural, material and geographic specificity.



Figure 4 Half-houses William Street, St Albans, 1958. Source, State Library of Victoria, H2016.285/31

2.4 Local government intervention

The need for quickly constructed housing on affordable suburban blocks, saw local government step into the post-war housing crisis with a series of attempts to loosen regulation and free up supply. In St Albans, which was

partially in the Shire of Braybrook and partially in the Shire of Keilor, opportunity was created through a combination of relaxed building regulations, low land values, small farmers willing to sell their marginal farm land and local real estate agents who could see an opportunity. Many migrants chose St Albans for the same reasons as this resident;

He settled for St Albans as it was one of the only places in Melbourne where the Council would allow migrants to partially build a house (bungalow) with the understanding that when they were financial enough they would finish building the rest of the house. My husband bought a package deal which consisted of land and a bungalow on it for £750. He bought it through a Mr John(sic) Eisner who was a land agent for Horsefall Homes in Footscray. [St Albans Railway Centenary Committee, 1987:56]

Since at least 1946, the St Albans Progress Association were publishing letters in newspapers asking that people consider erecting houses in St Albans, where 'land is cheap and available.' Many long term residents had been waiting for the housing boom which had remained unrealised since the 1890s. In February 1946, *The Argus* published an article about the Housing Minister requesting Councils to lift restrictions on temporary dwellings to ease the housing crisis. [*The Argus* 4 July 1946 p.7] Then in November 1946, the *Sunshine Advocate* published an article stating that: "Permission to erect a portion of a house would be given providing an undertaking were given that the house would be completed when supplies of material are available." [*Sunshine Advocate* 29 November 1946, p.3] In 1947 Braybrook Council published its policy on temporary housing;

Following the carrying of a notice of motion by Cr. Barclay, The Braybrook Council will now give consideration to applications for permission to erect dwellings as temporary houses and will view each case on its merits. It was thought that the policy of asking applicants to build half their houses in preference to living in a shed or garage was too harsh considering present conditions. So as to protect the Council from the possibility of future slums certain conditions have been laid down. The stipulations are that the applicant must erect a complete dwelling when conditions permit, drainage must be satisfactory and land fenced and he must agree to vacate the temporary dwelling when a full house is erected or accommodation is available elsewhere. A minimum standard for temporary dwellings is to be fixed by the Shire Engineer and each case will be reviewed every 12 months. [*Sunshine Advocate* 14 March 1947, p.2]

In St Albans, similar regulations were enforced in a very ad hoc manner. Local St Albans historian Joseph Ribarow has traced instances of Keilor Council relaxing their building regulations as far back as 1924. In 1938 there is the first documented instance of Council allowing an application for a home to be built progressively over a 12 month period. After this there is numerous reports in newspapers of Keilor and Braybrook Council approving and discussing temporary houses, part dwellings and small bungalows. [Ribarow 2018:2-3] In 1951 George Eisner sent a letter to the Council, and the *Sunshine Advocate* reported that Mr Eisner explained to Council that these pre-fabricated houses built by new Australians were intended for use on the completion of permanent residences. [*Sunshine Advocate*, 15 June, 1951 p.2]

Some local residents have stated that the Shire Engineer colluded in the construction of the half-houses, by giving building permit applicants a design for a half-house over the Shire counter. Unfortunately most of the Shire files for this period appear to have disappeared and so this cannot be confirmed. [Personal Communication; Council building surveyor, 2019.]

The pattern of development in St Albans can be seen through aerial photographs which show that large numbers of half-houses were constructed in small subdivisions, which had been bought and then developed by local real estate agents like George Eisner. Eisner had purchased blocks of land from local farmers, sometimes already subdivided on title, and then proceeded to sell each allotment with a half house on-site. It is clear from aerial photographs and oral testimony that there was little service provision to these properties, no fencing and even no roads. Keilor Council continued to approve these developments until at least 1968 whilst they obviously struggled to provide services in a timely manner. For some early residents it was 5 years before they had roads made in front of their houses.

St Albans was possibly a bit slower to develop post-war housing compared to other suburbs, as in 1951 there is only a few half houses evident on aerial photographs, and houses are randomly scattered across the landscape with goat tracks between them. In 1954, the aerial photograph shows the landscape regularly divided, roads have been marked out and regular blocks of land have marched across open paddocks to encircle small farms. The number of half-houses which can be seen is estimated at about 50% of total housing. On the 1962 aerial photo St Albans has regular streets, all blocks are occupied and half-houses are evident on only about 20% of all blocks. In 1968, newer areas are developed to the north and these have new half-houses which were not evident in the 1950s.

Historic aerial photographs clearly show how half houses continued to be built in St Albans from 1951 until at least 1968. The development of half-houses occurred in one of two ways, the houses were either erected by a real estate agent on his own land and then sold as a house and land package, or land was purchased vacant and the owner erected a half-house. Either way, the construction of half-houses was something which the Keilor Council acquiesced in by relaxing regulations and giving new home owners a period of grace in which to complete the building. This is clearly not unique to St Albans, as there were other suburbs such as Braybrook, Ardeer and Sunshine where half-houses and temporary housing was also built and was a matter of Council policy.



W Czernik entertaining children on a motorcycle, 1950s

Figure 5 W Czernik entertaining children on a motorcycle, 1950s. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>



Figure 6 1954 Aerial photo of St Albans. Source, Landata

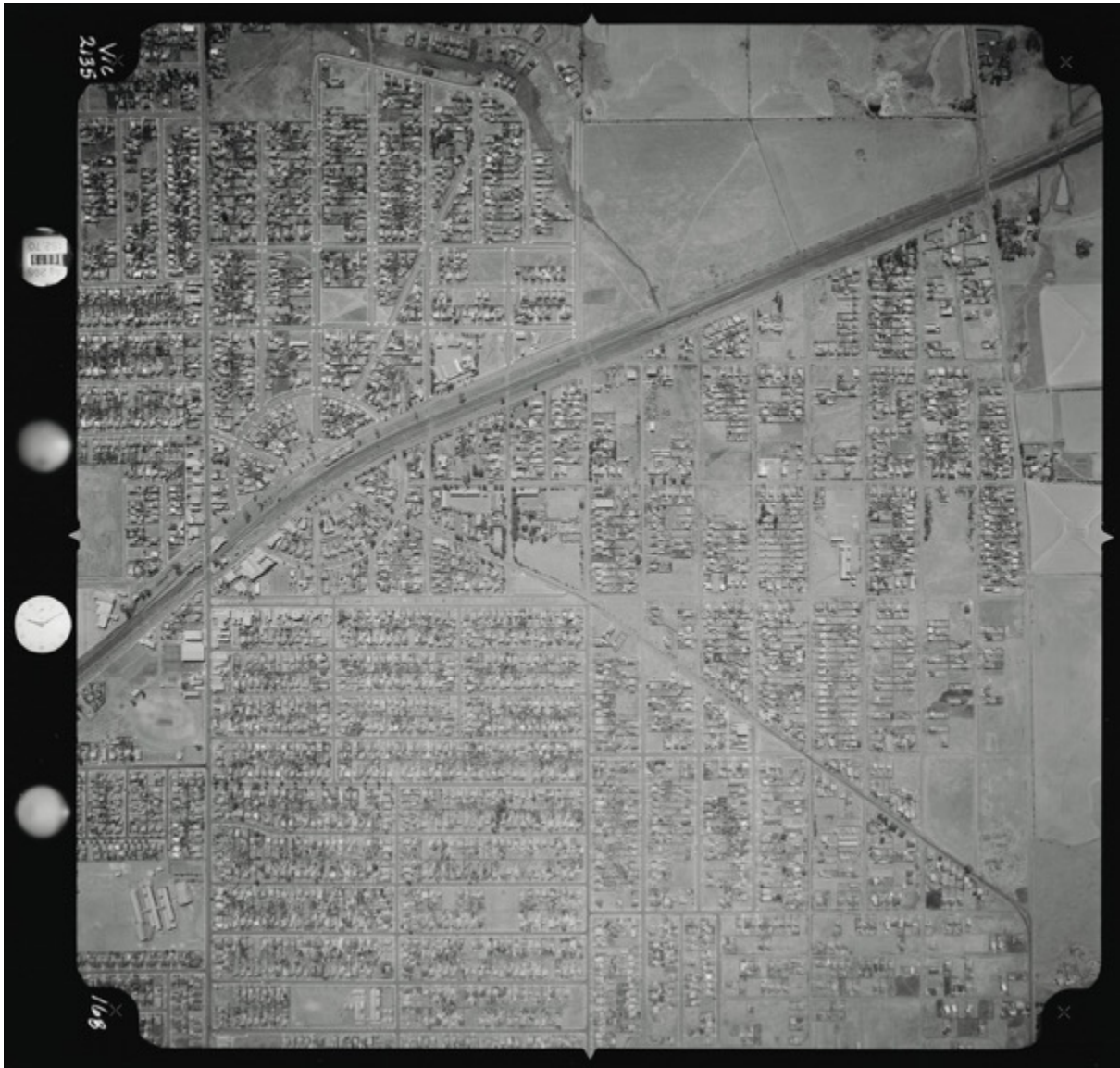


Figure 7 1968 Aerial photo of St Albans. Source, Landata

3.0 THEMATIC HISTORY

This section relates to the *Victorian Framework of Historical Themes* and relates more directly to the heritage of the half-houses and their place in the history of St Albans and Brimbank. The following themes have relevance to the history of half-houses:

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes:

2.5. Migrating and making a home

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state:

6.7. Making homes for Victorians

This section also refers to relevant sections of the City of Brimbank *Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study Environmental History*, written by Olwen Ford and Gary Vines in 2000.

3.1 Migrating and making a home

This theme deals not only with physical migration and the process of obtaining a house, but also with the psychological and social aspects of migration, as remembered by migrants themselves. The Brimbank Environmental History has a very brief summary of this theme:

In the post-war migration period vast numbers of migrants arrived from Britain and Europe and were temporarily housed very close to the Brimbank area, notably at the migrant hostels in Maribyrnong and Brooklyn. The proximity to relatively cheap land, and to jobs in the region's industries, encouraged many to settle in the Sunshine-St Albans area, which expanded enormously in the 1950s-60s.

Many migrants of the 1950s built their own houses, beginning often with a half-house or bungalow and transporting building materials on a bicycle or wheelbarrow. Local government regulations (especially those of Keilor Council) were sufficiently flexible to permit the construction of half houses. A few 'half-houses' survive in St Albans and Ardeer. [Ford & Vines, 2000:29]

For the purposes of this report, a great deal of the first-hand information on half-houses has come from oral histories collected by the community and published in numerous sources. These oral histories document the process of migration and the making of a house, but also reveals the social and psychological factors inherent in finding a home. Memories of the half-houses are caught up in these migration narratives and woven into personal stories of home making and settlement in Australia.

This experience of post-war migration and making a home in Australia, is a historical theme common to many of Melbourne's peri-urban suburbs. In 1995, Barbara and Graeme Davison wrote a paper called 'Suburban Pioneers' which looked at oral histories from post-war eastern suburbs Melbournians. Their data was gathered for the purpose of recording people's post-war housing experiences, and they found that there was a shared narrative theme of pioneering. The authors compare the stories that the Post-War generation tell about their outer suburban homes, to the historical narrative of the C19th British pioneer; celebrating courage, enterprise, perseverance and taming the environment. The oral histories they collected had a familiar narrative arc of arrival in an empty landscape, clearing, subduing and battling against the elements, the struggle to make a place that was 'domesticated' and comfortably European. [Davison, 1995:42]



Spivey family, first car 1958 (c) P Spivey

Figure 8 Spivey family first car 1958 copyright Philip Spivey. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>



This tendency is also noted in other places, such as in the work of Sophie Watson and Alec McGillivray in Western Sydney. They note that the dream of 'a home of one's own' becomes integrated into migrant narratives of success, and represents a space in which different patterns of everyday life can be pursued in private. [Troy,1995]

This is also true in St Albans, where oral histories document the feelings and priorities of migrants establishing themselves in Australia. In fact, this is even clearer in St Albans as it is an unusually well-researched suburb, with 45 oral histories transcribed in the most recent book on the half-houses by local historian, Joseph Ribarow, which is a primary source of information on the half-houses. Most of the interviewees were children or teenagers when they arrived in Australia with their families. Many relate the long hours worked by their parents, the hardships of moving to a new country, learning a new language and acclimatising to a new home.

Many of these oral histories repeat themes from the pioneer narrative of making-do, persevering and the struggle that migrant families endured to make St Albans their home. In this they reflect very closely the oral histories of the same generation in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. In the case of St Albans, this was accentuated by the recent experience of many of the subjects as they had survived war, displacement and homelessness. St Albans had a much higher percentage of displaced persons and refugees than the eastern suburbs, and this possibly made their experiences more difficult. Some migrants found pride in being able to provide for their families in difficult circumstances, just as Watson and McGillivray found in their study of Western Sydney. Helen Hoskin's family was one of these;

Dad slowly built onto the bungalow. It still amazes me how he knew what to do. Nothing seemed too difficult: building the frame, putting in windows, doors, plastering, plumbing, and flooring. It all seemed to come naturally. [Ribarow, 2018:53]

The experience of having to 'make do' and provide housing for themselves, appeared to foster a strong feeling of independence and self-reliance, and quickly established a sense of community, as people mucked in and helped each other. For those that could rise above the stresses of migration and were able to overcome the feelings of homesickness, the creation of even such a tiny, temporary home, gave a sense of pride. That the new home was such a distinctive and unique half-house, has seemed to make the memories even more vivid. Thea Dukic arrived as a teenager from Holland with her family:

My father and my husband built this house together. My father built his own house and my husband helped him build it. He said that was his dream. He said he had the dream that he was coming to Australia and that he was going to build his own home. And he did it. He did achieve his dream. [Ribarow, 2018:56]

Sylvia Bluemel came from Germany with her parents:

I don't know why my parents chose to settle in St Albans. When we moved into our house it was only half finished...My father built on as he could afford it and my mother helped with what she could...The power was not connected to our street when we came. The only heating in the house was a kerosene heater that was also used for cooking. We had water connected but that was just at the front of the property...I actually adored living there because you formed friendships. The streets were unmade and there were lots of paddocks. [Ribarow, 2018:35-36]

The migration experience in St Albans is strongly associated with the making of a home in a strange environment, with the lack of services and amenity, with the development of a community of people who all experienced the same hardships. The narrative they tell reflect on themselves as 'captains of their own fate' and the most positive memory, to which they all seem to relate, is that of a shared experience with others and the kindness of new friends made in a new community.



Figure 9 Half Houses Henry Street, St Albans, 1958. Source, State Library of Victoria, H2016.285/30

The self-made, self-image of endurance is collectively an important founding myth of the migrant family in St Albans. Michael Virant and Peter Nowatschenko remember the adversity that their parents endured and the energy of their fathers:

My earliest memories of our new home at 12 Thomas Street St Albans were of unmade roads with open smelly gutters and surrounded by empty paddocks full of snakes and other vermin. The bungalow was freezing in winter and sweltering in summer. Fortunately, my father and several of his new work mates (who were also IRO displaced persons) banded together and formed a small co-operative whereby they extended their respective bungalows one at a time which made life a bit more comfortable. My mother hated St Albans and suffered badly from homesickness and the deprivation of the most basic facilities she had grown accustomed to back home in Germany. I recall that there was no electricity or running water in Thomas Street when we first arrived. [Ribarow 2018:66]

My dad built the first house himself; it was a simple shack. All he had was the material from the packing cases of motor cars, so that's what he used, and lined it with tar impregnated material over the outside to make it waterproof. We lived in there until he could build the house itself...I think my father took about three years to build the house. He worked night shift so that he could work on the house during the daytime. [Ribarow, 2018:34]

Some migrants found the conditions they were expected to live in too much to bear, such as this letter writer to *The Age*, in 1953:

Sir- I live in St Albans, together with thousands of other migrants of different nationalities. There are families with three and four children living in huts measuring 20 ft x 10 ft and 30 ft x 10 ft. Sewerage, made roads and in places electricity do not exist. This is a shocking state of affairs which could lead to an epidemic. In no other civilised country would human beings be expected to live under such dirty, unhygienic, overcrowded conditions. If Australia is not in a position to provide the basic facilities without which it is impossible for civilised human beings to exist, then mass migration is irresponsible and dangerous to the whole nation. A.S. (St Albans) [*The Age*, Tuesday 19 May 1953 p.2]



St Albans backyard setting 1950s

Figure 10 St Albans backyard setting 1950s. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>

3.2 Making homes for Victorians

This theme talks more directly to the issues around the provision and construction of shelter and a home. The Environmental History of Brimbank summarised this history in St Albans:

The still open paddocks offered relatively cheap land for young people and for newly arrived migrants. Migrants arrived from Europe and government hostels with virtually nothing... Many migrants built their own houses, starting with a half-house or bungalow. A very few are left today. Fr. Reis later remembered: 'Everyone lived in bungalows. There were no numbers and no fences. It seemed to be an area of identical and anonymous houses. Tony Mochon recalled: 'The place was all hammering and banging at the week-end. You went to bed Saturday night and when you woke up Sunday morning, someone had built a shack next door to you.'

People planted vegetables in their front gardens, as well as in the back in those early days. They planted fruit trees, deciduous trees or conifers. Grape vines and prickly pear appeared in back yards. Some of these can still be seen along Kororoit Creek. Eventually most of the half-houses became three-bedroomed weatherboard or brick veneer houses with attractive gardens. [Ford & Vines, 2000: 77]

Braybrook and Keilor councils, were important participants in the process of making or providing homes in St Albans. Without the acquiescence of the councils, half-houses could never have happened. The councils were very conscious of their role in this and the council minutes clearly show that councillors knew they were walking a fine line between becoming active participants in creating 'slum' conditions, whilst responding to the housing crisis, and the pressure of developers. A great worry of the councils was that they were building sub-standard housing which would 'bring down the area'. The Chief Medical Officer for Sunshine Council was particularly alert to housing issues in his suburb and made numerous reports and representations to the council about housing conditions in the 1940s and 50s. In 1945, he was reporting on the different types of housing including the Commonwealth War Housing Trust and the Victorian Housing Commission, as well as temporary and part-houses. The medical officer detailed concerns in his assessment of the houses built by government, and privately built temporary and semi-permanent houses. He summarised his report into housing conditions; "The temporary

and semi-permanent homes are a definite menace to the health of the community... My objection to this is that all these houses are wrong in essentials, and could never be made into decent homes for decent people. I do not consider the exigencies of war justify the building of the "Dudley Flat" (ie;slum) type of dwelling in this shire."
[*Sunshine Advocate*, Fri 13 April, 1945, p.2]

Regardless of the medical officer's opinion, the erection of half-houses continued apace and approvals for the erection of half-houses in Keilor Shire continued until at least 1968. The prescient Sunshine council medical officer suspected that many of the temporary structures would become semi-permanent and then be patched up to become permanent, which is exactly what has happened in St Albans. Many St Albans residents have stories like these families:

From George Eisner our family ordered a three-roomed bungalow for 500 pounds, available on 100 pound deposit. It took about two years to pay it off...They were happy to have their own land, cook their own food, and hear no noise from the neighbours. They lived for five years in the bungalow before selling it and moving to a bigger home in Henry Street. [Ribarow, 2018:28]

After a few months living in Richmond we moved to St Albans and lived under the most arduous conditions. We left Greece from a suburb of Athens that had electricity, running water, even a stove and a fridge. We came to St Albans...oh what a hell hole!The part house had two rooms and he created a little shed at the back that was the kitchen...These experiences are unforgettable! [Ribarow, 2018:29]

One Estonian fellow had a block of land on the corner of the street and he bought two boxes from Volkswagen. He put them up there and he mentioned that he had a place of abode...The people from the Immigration Department came down one day...and those two chaps were laughing their heads off. Anyhow they let the children come down. Well why not if they wanted to live there and were able to do so? He wasn't the only one. He was one of a few who was using the VW boxes as accommodation and why the hell not when some Australians used to live in tents. [Ribarow,2018:14]

The development of half-houses in St Albans, and the relaxation of building regulations to allow for temporary structures, has had a long-term impact on the typology of the suburb's housing stock. Many half-houses have been adapted to become skillion sleep-outs or kitchen/laundries attached to the rear of later weatherboard and brick houses, or have been incorporated into the house design. The suburb has a unique assemblage of houses with rear, side and front sections which display the dimensions of previously free-standing timber framed half-houses. These are of quite unique designs incorporating low skillion, gable or butterfly roofs which reflect half-house dimensions. The number of very small timber framed buildings, of unique owner-builder design, in St Albans could possibly be one reason why the place is still so attractive to new migrants and those seeking affordable housing.



Alfrieda Street St Albans in the winter 1954

Figure 11 Alfrieda Street, St Albans in the winter 1954. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>

3.3 St Albans Half-Houses

The development of half-houses in St Albans grew from a confluence of national factors discussed above, and local factors which included local councils allowing temporary and part-housing to be built. The confluence of factors which led to the development of half-houses in St Albans, were made more particular with the presence of a number of local real estate agents who had developed a house and land package system. Agents would advertise land in St Albans with what they termed small houses, part houses and bungalows, already built on the block, or available for an additional cost. (The description 'half-houses' isn't used in contemporary advertising.) As we have seen, this was not unique to St Albans, and was happening in Sunshine, Braybrook, Footscray and other parts of the western suburbs. The exceptional aspect was the sheer number of half-houses constructed in St Albans, in such a concentrated period of time, and the collected history of these houses which brings the story of these small houses alive.

3.3.1 Financing a home

One of the most pressing issues for migrants was getting access to finance and credit in order to purchase land and a roof over their heads. The question of how to pay for a home for their families was difficult for new migrants who had limited English, no credit or work history, and most with no savings or assets. Some arrived already in debt to the Australian Government and had their wages garnished at migrant hostels and workplaces. Some migrants reported that they had to relinquish 80% of their salary in the Government run hostels and then were expected to be able to house their families within 12 months of arrival. These financial pressures on new migrants made many of them desperate for a housing solution and willing to accept almost anything which afforded them some independence.

The financial difficulties faced by migrants was a compelling reason for the council's decision to allow temporary and part-housing. This did not stop the council from occasionally prosecuting migrants who built illegally, such as Leo Dobes, who arrived in 1950 with his pregnant wife:

I was earning £7/10/- per week, but I was getting quite often overtime on Saturdays and Sundays. Then I was searching for somebody who would be willing to advance the deposit to build a bungalow. The

bungalow cost £50 to £70. It was 10 x 12 feet, cement sheet outside, no inside lining, and that was all. I had a lot of problem to persuade Custom Credit to lend me the money on a bungalow that will be built on land that I haven't paid off yet. Somehow it all happened fine...At the same time I drew a plan of a home which I intended to build and put a little bungalow on the property to use as temporary accommodation, but unfortunately the local council for some reason wanted to stop building the bungalows. [Ribarow, 2018:13]

Local real estate agents provided a ready source of finance and a promise of a quick solution to the problem of housing a family. George Eisner, himself a migrant from Czechoslovakia, advertised that he could provide small houses on deposits of £110, £140 or £160 balance on weekly payments. "Each small house is ready to move into within two weeks and being constructed as a solid part of a permanent house. Can be extended any time to full sized modern villa. 800 similar houses already completed and occupied by nearly 4000 people is our best recommendation." [*The Age*, Saturday June 26, 1954, page 36]

R.J.A Thornton Estate Agent, Balwyn and later of St Albans was advertising house and land packages, in the *Sunshine Advocate*. Land title searches on blocks around Thomas and Shirley streets indicate that he purchased, subdivided and developed 58 lots in West St Albans in 1957. These were gradually purchased and transferred to new owners between 1957 and 1970. Aerial photos show that approximately 90% of these blocks had half-houses constructed on them by 1968. (See case study 2)

George Eisner had started as a real estate agent with Horsfall Homes in Footscray, and had been one of the early developers of half-houses. Another agent was J.A Setek of Main Road St Albans, who advertised houses and part-houses for sale on land in St Albans. Other St Albans real estate agents selling part houses include H.C Knowles, Townsend, John Stevens and F.J Scheurer.

Jimmy Knowles, son of H.C Knowles remembers George Eisner being the one who 'kicked off St Albans'.

George wasn't an agent at the start but he was a very shrewd businessman and land dealer. At that time land was very cheap because you could probably buy land at about £25 or £30 a block. He would pay options on every second or third block and build it up, which of course increased the value of the ones in between. He was pretty shrewd. [Ribarow 2018:60].

The profit margin on these house and land packages must have been considerable. In the early 1950s some of the terms related by owners are that they would pay a £100 deposit and then pay £5 a week with 5% interest. This was for a cement sheet half-house with electricity and water connected. Betty and Phil moved to St Albans in 1953. They bought a block of land in Power Street for £160, available on £30 deposit.

From George Eisner our family ordered a three-room bungalow for £500, available on £100 deposit. It took about two years to pay it off at £5 per week. [Ribarow, 2018:27]

Without interest, Betty and Phil had paid £780 for their land and half-house, which in 1953 was still incredibly cheap, and this was obviously a large part of the appeal of St Albans.

Peter Bobek remembers that his German parents bought a half-house from George Eisner in 1952. He felt that many people had been 'ripped off' buying houses because of their poor command of English. Their 3 room half-house at 23 Glendenning Street was occupied by them for a few years until they built their new weatherboard and tile villa in front of it. The old half-house was still attached to the rear when they sold it a few years ago. [P.Bobek pers.com. 2019]

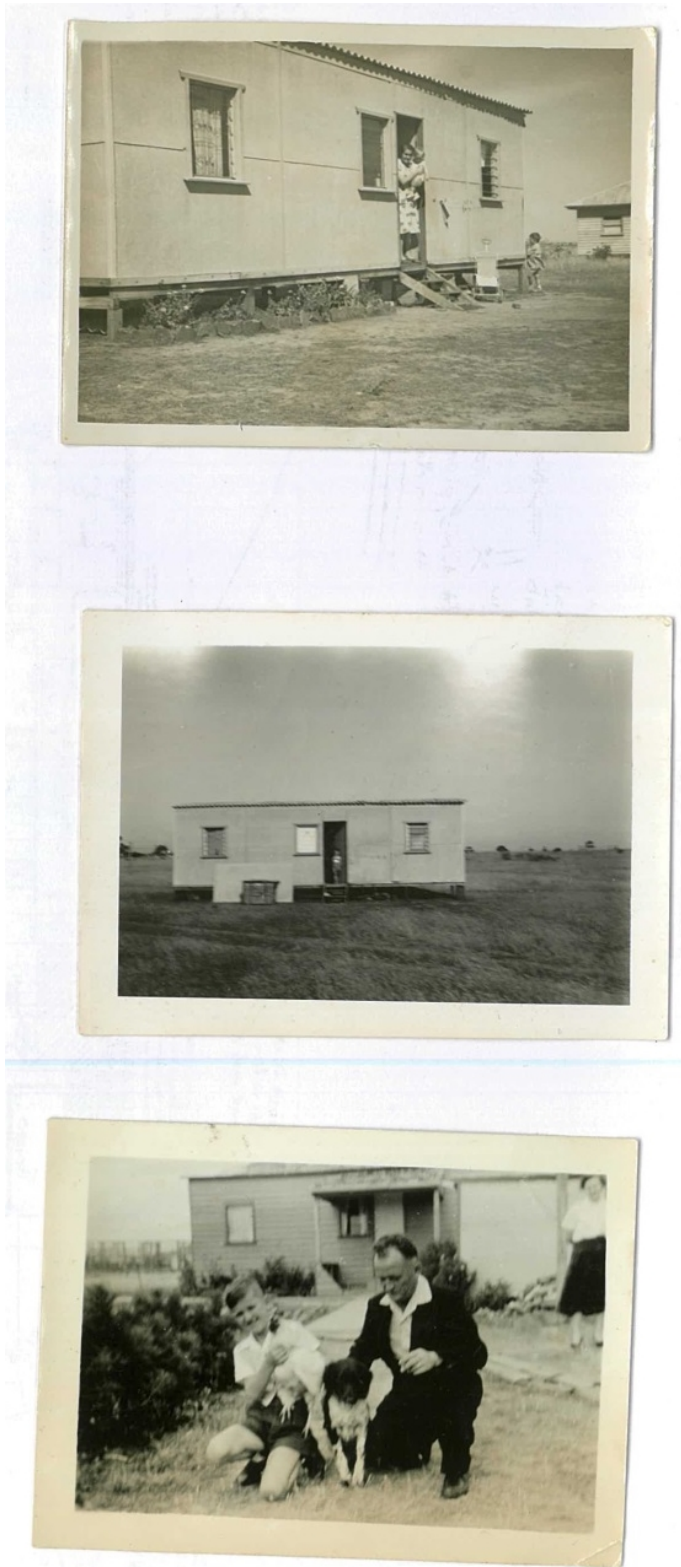


Figure 12 Bobek family photo album, circa 1952. Source, P.Bobek

The Stevens family had arrived in St Albans in 1907 where they established a farm and began buying up blocks of land around the railway. The family had bought farm blocks that were unsaleable in the 1930s and 1940s, but by 1950, suddenly people were looking for housing in St Albans. The Stevens family opened a timber yard to service the booming housing market and then they started to sell 50 by 150 foot house blocks to new migrants on their Stevensville Estate.

John Stevens started a real estate business selling the blocks to migrants, whilst his brother sold them the timber to build their half-houses. [Ribarow, 2012: 16] Jimmy Knowles also sold real estate with his dad and remembers that in the early fifties a block in St Albans could sell for £50, by the mid-fifties some of the inner blocks were selling for £200 to £300, and a three-bedroom house near the railway cost £1,000. [Ribarow 2012:35]

3.3.2 Half-house design

Over 150 half-houses were looked at during the course of this study. There is a number of common design elements that are repeated in different parts of the suburb and across the entire period of half-house construction. These design elements are influenced by the availability of materials, the skills of the builder and the requirements of the owners, over time, which saw the building design evolve.

The oral histories talk about a range of materials used in the half-houses; asbestos-cement sheet, corrugated iron, car packing cases, plaster, tar impregnated papers, weatherboards, timber stumps, tile roofs, louvre windows and small timber windows. Building materials found in the half-houses, such as asbestos-cement sheet and terracotta tiles could easily have been sourced from the local Wunderlich factory at Albion, where a number of the St Albans migrants worked. [Ribarow, 2018:38]

There were two broad phases to the building of half-houses - before 1950 and after 1950. The Commonwealth government lifted restrictions on residential building in 1950 and this saw the building and construction industry grow rapidly in St Albans. Oral history and historic photos indicate that prior to 1950, the few half-houses that appeared in St Albans were generally much smaller and simpler than those that appeared after the restrictions were lifted. Leo Dobes' half-house for example, built in 1950, was only 10 x 12 feet. (3.65m x 3m) Most of the pre-1950 half-houses appear to have been built by individuals, rather than professional builders. After 1950, local real estate agents and professional builders were constructing large numbers of speculative half-houses or shells, and then owner-builders were finishing or extending them.

Local newspaper advertisements in the *Sunshine Advocate* after 1950, indicate a range of different sized half-houses which were available for purchase or commission, at 12 x 10, 12 x 8, 20 x 10 and 16 x 8 feet. However, very few of the extant half-houses are as small as these measurements indicate, and none that have been identified have been square in plan. The highly intact, 59 George Street for example, measures approximately 36 x 12 feet.(11.18m x 3.54m) It is probable that the very small examples were quickly extended or altered by owners, and that larger examples being more practical, were more likely to be retained in their original form.

Some local real estate agents contracted builders to construct multiple, identical half-houses on every lot in a subdivision. This was the method adopted by agents such as Thornton in Shirley and Thomas Street and Eisner, at multiple sites across St Albans. Theo van der Voort remembers his dad, Gordon van der Voort getting a job as a carpenter with Frank Horsfall of Horsfall homes, building bungalows in St Albans. The first two bungalows he built were for his family and his work partner, in 1952. [Ribarow, 2018: 14]

St Albans half-houses were repetitive in dimensions, locations within the allotment, materiality and design. The similarity of the half-house design (no matter who constructed it), lay in the simple rectangular plan and limited range of materials. Almost all half-houses were timber framed, skillion roofed, and clad in either weatherboards or asbestos-cement sheet, and sometimes both were used on different facades. They were constructed with one long façade that had no eaves. This was the façade that was meant to be extended and incorporated into the interior of a larger house, and often had no windows. Half-houses were generally rectangular in plan and linear in the arrangement of rooms inside.(See the measured drawings in section 3.3) Some were large enough to have three rooms plus a small bathroom and some were two rooms with external bathroom. All had external toilets when first built as the suburb was not sewered until the 1960s.



The exceptions to the general skillion design of half-houses were the odd examples of owner-builders with more construction or design skills than most, and who could figure out how to make a more complex roof form such as 74 Vincent Avenue. Others, like Sylvia Bluemel's father, constructed a house with a projecting front gable and pergola, "to make it as German-like as possible." [Ribarow, 2018:36] In St Albans West there are a number of houses with a very similar design, which were possibly made by a single builder, with a recessed central doorway under a skillion roof, however these were probably unusual

There is a combination of factors which led to the 'standard' or recognisable design of the St Albans skillion half-house like 59 George Street, illustrated in section 3.3:

- the limited range of affordable building materials that were available in the post-war period;
- the need for the house design to be flexible enough to be altered, extended and relocated;
- building regulations which specified minimum sizes and standards of construction;
- the limited skills of local owner-builders and tradesmen;
- the speed of construction;
- the use of the same plan by a number of different builders and owner-builders.

For agents like Eisner, who claims to have pre-fabricated 800 half-houses, the skillion design was an ideal unit that provided a minimum of shelter and comfort whilst providing the most economic use of materials. There was no wasted timber in roof trusses and eaves, no verandahs or decorative details, no chimney or fireplace, only one run of gutter, and sometimes not even an internal lining on walls. Although Eisner claims to have pre-fabricated these buildings it is unlikely that he did so and a contemporary real estate agent, when asked, said he believed the houses were all constructed by local builders, on-site. [J.Knowles personal comm. September 2019]

3.3.3 Owner-builders

The term owner-builder is usually used to describe someone who buys vacant land and then proceeds to build their own house upon it, but in St Albans this description is less clear-cut. Most half-house owners report that they undertook a large part of the renovation, improvement and fit-out of half -houses themselves, from the day they took ownership. This was not at all unusual in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s when almost 30% of all domestic building was carried out by owner-builders. [Boyd, 1951.p.171]

Extrapolated from title searches, it is estimated that almost 80% of St Albans migrants were purchasing land and a half-house from a real estate agent. However most of these half-houses were actually incomplete shells that required the owners to do the internal fit-out themselves. So although they were purchasing land and a 'house', they were also effectively acting as owner-builders. Many were contracting the real estate agents to provide them with something we would call a house at lock-up stage, rather than a finished construction. The oral histories indicate that a majority of migrants were acting as owner-builders, possibly more than 80%.

That the St Albans half-house has such a ubiquitous design is not adequately explained in the published oral histories. Most European migrants would have been unused to timber frame construction methods and many had 'never held a hammer' until the day they bought their land. It is presumed that the common design language was acquired through a combination of factors, including the sharing of knowledge among community members and the certainty that the design constructed in large numbers by local real estate agents, was a size and design that would be approved by council and easy to construct.

Dace Zvaigzne remembers her clever father designing and building their half-house himself. Their design is more unusual than other half houses, with a tiled roof and a decorative front porch, eaves and large windows. "He did nearly all the work himself but there were times when a working bee was organized with some other Latvians. This was especially so with putting up wall frames and the roof because that was a difficult job for one man." [Ribarow, 2018:46]



Figure 13 Zvaigzne family home, Kodre Street, 1950s. Source, <https://www.historyofstalbens.com>

By 1951, one in three houses in Australia were being built by owner-builders. St Albans therefore, was probably typical of other outer-suburbs in Australia at the time. The spread of little wooden houses across Australia's new suburbs was helped along by the publishing of owner-builder self-help manuals. Those available in Victoria had titles like *Your House and How To Build It*, 1955; *You Can Build Your Own Home!*, 1946, from the Homes Builders Advisory Service; *How to Build Your Own Home and Save 1000 pounds!*, 1955 from the *Herald Sun*; *Home-builders Handbook* 1957, from the Small Homes Service of the RAlA and *The Age*; *Be Your Own Builder*, 1952; and *About Building A House*, 1957 by the *Australian Womens Weekly*. These publications gave advice about financing, plumbing, electricals and some even provided blueprints of house plans for submission to Council. Many of the plans shown in the Ribarow book could have come from these manuals, including the Zvaigzne house design shown in Figure 13.

Free advice was probably also gleaned from local timber yards and building suppliers like the Stevens family in St Albans, who provided a range of materials sourced from local manufacturers. Many migrants co-operated together to build each other's houses and with time, some of the men, like Wladimir Czernik, would have developed a lot of half-house construction experience that they could pass onto others.

Building the home started with two small structures: one was the laundry, bathroom and kitchen, while the separate bungalow contained two small bedrooms. Gradually the rest of the weatherboard house was added on. Dad did most of the work himself. This is where the friendships established in the hostels proved their worth as several families helped each other in the tasks of building, the men taking turns to works on each other's houses. [Ribarow, 2018:45]

These factors- availability of materials and advice, and construction skills, all contributed to the similarity of the half-house design as constructed by different builders, speculators and owners, and the limited palette of materials that we find in them to this day.

3.3.4 Half-house evolution

The majority of half-houses identified during this study are now altered or extended from their original design. Many have been relocated and some are almost unrecognisable. This evolution began almost from the day that owners took possession of them. More so for those who had constructed or bought a very small two-roomed half-house.

Most of the earliest half-houses, from c.1949 to c.1961, were clad in weatherboard or asbestos-cement sheet and had corrugated iron or asbestos-cement 'Super Six' skillion roofs. Some later half-houses, from the mid 1950s,

had tile roofs and some had brick extensions added. Many half-houses evolved from a partly owner-built timber framed half-house to a brick veneer and tile villa, partly built by professional builders.

Most half-houses identified during the course of this study, were attached to the rear of a larger weatherboard or brick villas. Some people just gradually extended the half-house with more timber framing as money became available adding a second skillion to create a single gable roof, such as examples in Shirley Street.

A typical evolution is demonstrated by the story of the Magri family of Milawa Avenue, St Albans. The Magris occupied their half-house for at least 23 years before they built a new brick veneer house to the front of the half-house. The new brick house with timber half-house at the rear was then extended two or more times to accommodate the growing family. Today the property has a brick and tile house at the front, a half-house section in the middle, and newer skillion extensions at the rear. Without the family coming forward to explain the evolution of their home, this would not have been recognisable from aerial images. [M.Magri, pers.com. 2019]

Many owners in Milawa Avenue which had half-houses on both sides of the street by 1954, simply built a new brick villa in front of the half-house and used the half-house for a rear sleepout. The process of adapting these buildings took many years and typically went through many stages. Kon Haumann remembers his family's first house:

The house was in Alfreda Street. Originally there were two blocks of land, with a bungalow on the corner with an empty block next to it. The family home was built on that, and it took a number of years as we had to finance it ourselves. It was not easy to get finance from the banks in those days. On getting married in February 1964, my wife and I moved into the bungalow. In June 1964 we decided to build a new brick veneer house. The bungalow was moved to the back of the block and the new house built in front. It was finished in October in time for our first daughter, Caroline, who was born at the end of December 1964. [Ribarow, 2004:189-90]

Some half-house designs were different as oral history and family photos attest, and these are much harder to recognise now, as half-houses. These differences might be attributable to the cultural origins of the owner-builder or to a particular sense of design of the individual owner or just, as described above, to a greater level of skill of the owner-builder. At this distance, it is very hard to attribute any cultural specificity to the buildings which have been altered and adjusted by new owners over the years. Sylvia Bluemel arrived in St Albans in 1954 and remembers her father building them a tiny little house;

The little house was beautiful. It wasn't the basic bungalow that you saw around the district. My father built the house in that shape with the angled roof at the front because he tried to make it look as German-like as possible. [Ribarow 2018:36]

Other half-houses were of the standard design, but the builders adapted building traditions from their homelands:

When we came to Cowper Street the house was probably two rooms and that was built by my father and other people. My parents slept in one room and we kids slept in the other. Then another room was built so the boys and girls would have separate bedrooms. Then more was added and it became a full house. I think the whole house took less than a year to build. When the frame was up the first thing they did was put a branch of a tree up on the top of the roof. That was a tradition. I could never find out why, but that was a tradition of the Europeans. [Ribarow, 2018:38]



Haumann family in their garden, Alfrieda Street 1950s

Figure 14 Haumann family in their Garden, Alfrieda Street, St Albans 1950s. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery#sta>



Figure 15 Castagna's Bungalow, (1953) 211 Main Road West, St Albans. Source, <https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery#sta>

3.4 Case Studies

The following two case studies document the purchase, subdivision and development of land that was known to have half-houses. They indicate the complexity of half-house development and the ways and means that half-houses were built and adapted.

3.4.1 Case Study 1: Shirley and Thomas Street Half-Houses

Phillip Spivey remembers his family purchasing 13 Shirley Street sometime around 1956, as 'that was the only suburb they could afford'. In the next street, 12 Thomas Street, was bought by Adolf and Elisabeth Virant on the 25 July 1955. [Ribarow, 2018: 41,66] Both families purchased their land from John Thornton of Willis Street North Balwyn, who was a real estate agent and land developer in St Albans West.

Thornton had purchased the land between Thomas, Margrave and Emily Streets containing eleven acres, in 1951. A Mr Teasdale, farmer from Rupanyup had purchased the property in 1949 from the widow of James Henry Stevens, who was a local farmer. He had purchased it in 1919 from Alice Errington of St Albans, who had owned it since 1901, when the original subdivision was lodged. The land title certificate shows the eleven acres already subdivided with Thomas and Shirley streets laid out. The subdivision had not been realised and the land continued to be farmed until Thornton purchased it in 1951.

Thornton sold on the land almost exclusively to European migrants as the following names indicate on title certificates; Franjo Wasylewycz, Stefan and Elizabeth Daniliuk, Piotr Gorlo, Jan and Maria Juras, Stanislaw and Kaziniera Chocholek, Wiktoria Bielicka, Henry Michael Lynch, Tadeus and Leokadia Branski, Rupert and Anna Planinc, John William Swanson, William Smith and Jan Lukowski. [Land Titles; Vol 08212 Fol 423, Vol 02883 Fol 509, Vol 01814 Fol 724]

The 1954 aerial photo of the area shows that 11 blocks between Margrave and Thomas streets were occupied and most were half-houses. In 1968 the aerial photo shows 15 blocks in Shirley and Thomas streets with half-houses still clearly discernible. The Spivey family has lodged some family photos with Brimbank Library and one of these, is possibly incorrectly addressed as Rose Street, and shows a half-house identical to that at 13 Shirley Street, in 1958.



Figure 16 Spivey family bungalow. Source, [<https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>]

By 1968, 13 Shirley Street was rebuilt as a weatherboard and tile house and there is now, no sign of the old half-house that was there.

The Virant family in Thomas Street eventually extended their half-house using professional builders, who arrived at work on their bikes carrying their building tools. It took a year to extend the house with two bedrooms a kitchen and a lounge, whilst the old bungalow, which was rotated from a north-south alignment to east-west, became a

bathroom and laundry at the rear. The house has now been clad in fake brick sheeting and the iron roof has been replaced with tiles. The front windows have been replaced with aluminium windows, but the old half-house can still be seen at the back. [Ribarow,2018:66]

3.4.2 Case Study 2: Alfrieda Street Half-Houses

Alexander Dickson, Labourer of St Albans was the owner of five acres being lots 81 to 90 between Fox, Theodore, Conrad and Alfrieda streets, in 1906. The land then had numerous owners, all locals, until 1944 when the land was sold to John Hasan of Spencer Street, West Melbourne, Labourer. The 1954 aerial photo shows no development on the land excepting a pre-existing farmhouse.

Then in 1955 the property was purchased by Horsfall Homes, Pty Ltd of 743 Barkley Street, West Footscray. This is the same Horsfall Homes where George Eisner worked. They resubdivided the property into 34 lots. Lot A798766 on Alfrieda Street became number 127 and was purchased from Horsfall Homes by Gradus Bikkel in 1959. 127 Alfrieda Street was purchased by Mr and Mrs C. Kypreos who lived next door at 125, who extended the original half-house in accordance with plans submitted to Keilor Council in 1982. These plans show the original half-house used as a two room 'sun porch' at the rear of the weatherboard house. It measured 3140mm x 10680mm and appears to be in the same position as the 1968 aerial shows it. From the contemporary aerial, the half house is still visible as the rectangular section at the rear of the house with different roof material.

121 Fox Street was sold by Horsfall Homes to Wilhelm Scheurer, Motor Mechanic, and Traute Scheurer, Married Woman, of Fox Street St Albans in 1959. They had three mortgages on the property, to Gerhard Jacoby, George Eisner and the Southern Cross Assurance Company. These were discharged in early 1961 and another mortgage taken out in late 1961 to George Eisner again, which was discharged in 1968.

The 1956 aerial photo shows an incredible change from the previous year when the block had been subdivided by Horsfall Homes. Every one of the 30 lots, excepting one at the south west corner which has a pre-existing farm house on it, is occupied by a half-house.

The 1968 aerial still shows the farm house and some of its large trees but the block is now completely subdivided. Each lot has fencing, the streets are now asphalted and some show the beginnings of gardens. Along Conrad Street are 8 half houses in a row and then on Alfrieda Street numbers 127 and 125 are both half houses. 121 Fox Street appears to be a partly built house which has enlarged the original half-house from 1956.

This area today has quite a concentration of half-houses in varying states. Some are clearly visible as additions to extended weatherboard houses and some are still visible attached to the rear of brick and tile houses.



Figure 17 Backyard scene Fox Street. Source, [<https://www.brimbanklibraries.vic.gov.au/index.php/local-family-history-gallery>]

4.0 PHYSICAL SURVEY

The half-houses that remain in St Albans today come in a variety of forms, as described in section 5. There is a great variety of design in these buildings today as many were owner-built, and were being constructed at a time of liberal local building code regulations. The different designs have common denominators in the dimensions, timber frame, skillion roofs and lightweight cladding. Investigating Council building files has revealed that it is very difficult to identify half-houses which have been added to another building as they literally disappear into the new fabric, sometimes to be engulfed on all sides, and sometimes affixed to the rear or side. From aerials it is easiest to recognise them as they often have older corrugated iron or asbestos-cement, skillion roofs. Oral history has revealed a number of these that would not be found any other way.

Desktop and physical survey of the suburb has uncovered over 120 examples of half-houses in different states of integrity. The range of forms of the identifiable half-houses (three different groups have been identified) is very limited, possibly because other forms are much harder to discern in the built fabric. Local historian Joseph Ribarow has documented a number of house plans which were given to him by local residents. These show that some owners were quite inventive in the interpretation of 'part-house' and built one or two rooms of gabled, skillion and even hipped houses. However the most numerous by far was the rectangular two or three room, skillion roofed, weatherboard and asbestos-cement sheet clad half-house that is seen so frequently in family photos of St Albans.

A half-house at 59 George Street, classified by this study as a 'Group 1' (see section 5.2), and a very intact and complete example, was measured, photographed and assessed in detail to provide typological evidence of material, design and construction. 59 George Street is one of eight intact half-houses but it is possibly the most well-preserved of the eight.



Figure 18 Western façade 59 George Street, St Albans. The principal façade is made of a series of asbestos cement sheets on a timber frame. To the right hand side is the only door to the house enclosed by an asbestos cement porch and metal roof. All photographs taken 26 November 2019. Source, heritage Alliance

4.1 59 George Street, St Albans

The half-house at 59 George Street was one of at least 8 half-houses constructed on this side of George Street in the 1960s. The house next door is classified as a Group 3 house (see section 5.2), where the half-house has been built into a bigger timber house but is still recognisable in the form of the roof

A brief history of 59 George Street has been compiled from land title searches and aerial photos.

The Instrument of Transfer for 59 George Street (B263495) states that the property known as 59 George Street, (being Lot 23 on subdivision plan 25229) was owned by Section Homes Pty Ltd of 505 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. They sold number 59 to Giovanni Giroletti, Metal Finisher of Glenhuntly Road on the 9th of August 1960, for £1450. Giovanni then sold the same lot 23 to Arnold David Jarred and Jane Margaret Jarred of 13 Victoria Crescent, St Albans for £1300 on the same day, 9th August 1960.

Oral history by Kevin Jarred states that his father Arnold worked as a real estate agent and insurance salesman from their home in Victoria Crescent, St Albans from 1957 until his death in 1960. [Ribarow, 2018:59] Why Mr Giroletti sold the land to the Jarreds for a £150 loss cannot be explained, but it is possible that some form of irregular land dealing was occurring or that some form of deposit had already been transferred.

The half-house at 59 George Street first appears on the historic aerials in 1968. (The 1962 aerial does not cover this part of St Albans.) The house therefore dates to somewhere between 1960 and 1968.

4.2 Description of 59 George Street, St Albans



Figure 19 Northern façade facing George Street showing compressed fibre cement sheet boarding and metal sash window. Source, heritage Alliance

59 George Street is a house built on the east side of a large block of land of some 16m x 50m (52 feet x 164 feet). Toward the rear of the block are metal garage sheds which won't be described here. The land is flat and mostly covered by grass with occasional sub-surface basalt boulders present. A timber paling fence surrounds the property and there is an old internal fence of split palings and posts some 24m into the property. On the south of the paling fence is what appears to be a vegetable garden but may be the outline of a former septic tank.

The internal arrangement of the house is a rectangular floor plan as a series of enfilade rooms starting with a bedroom at the northern end, then a similar sized lounge and then kitchen-dining of slightly larger size. At the south end is a bathroom and laundry with a width less than half of any of the adjacent rooms. The house contains no corridors. The toilet is outside to the south in a small “dunny” shed of 1.6m x 1m with access via a narrow concrete path leading from the only external door.

The whole house is set some 300mm off the ground on timber stumps with a timber floor covered by vinyl sheet or carpet. There are no ant caps and the perimeter is closed in with horizontal battens. The wall construction is a timber stud frame. The roof is a timber framed low angle skillion with a “super-six” asbestos-cement cladding and asbestos-cement fascias although these are over-flashed with metal where broken. The west external wall is asbestos-cement in 3 ft wide sheets with cover strips. The house had weatherboarded northern, eastern and southern walls with timber casement windows but this has been replaced on the north and south by a compressed cement textured board where-as the east side original bull nosed timber weatherboards remain. Some windows (eg north and south ends) have been changed from timber side opening casements to metal sash windows.

Internal lining (walls and ceilings) are in *Caneite* board a patented product made from compressed sugar-cane trash and mostly taken up after World War II as a simple lining material. Skirtings and architraves to doors and windows are all in timber. The western façade has a small skillion porch clad with asbestos -cement sheet and protects the only exterior door which is not original to the house.

The only fixtures are the kitchen sink the bathroom sink and the steel bathtub. Other items (stove, hot-water unit) are all easily disconnected and removable. Overall the building is akin to a barracks structure with low-cost linings and exterior wall cladding. Something made for temporary occupancy by a small number of people.



Figure 20 Outdoor dunny at southern side of house, Source, heritage Alliance



Figure 21 Eastern façade showing bull-nosed timber weather-boards. Source, heritage Alliance



Figure 22 Southern Façade from backyard with outside toilet in asbestos cement sheet and intervening split paling fence. Source, heritage Alliance.

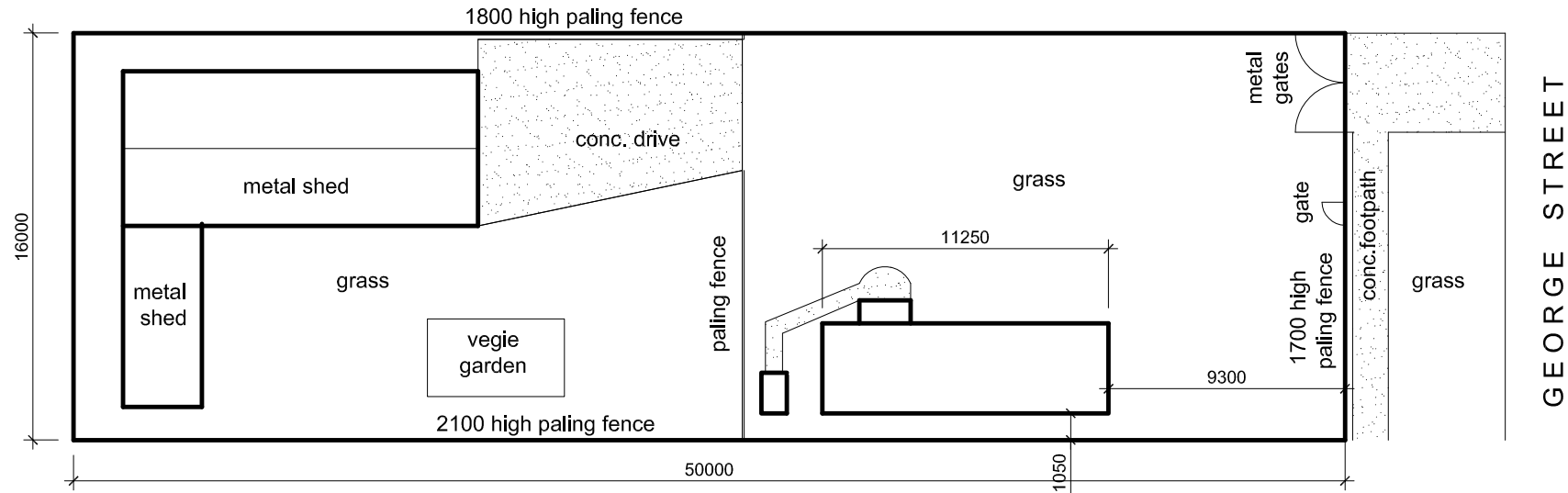


4.3 Measured Drawings of 59 George Street (on following pages)

Site Plan A.00

Plan A.01

Elevations A.02

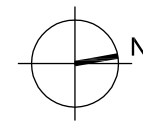


Measured Drawing

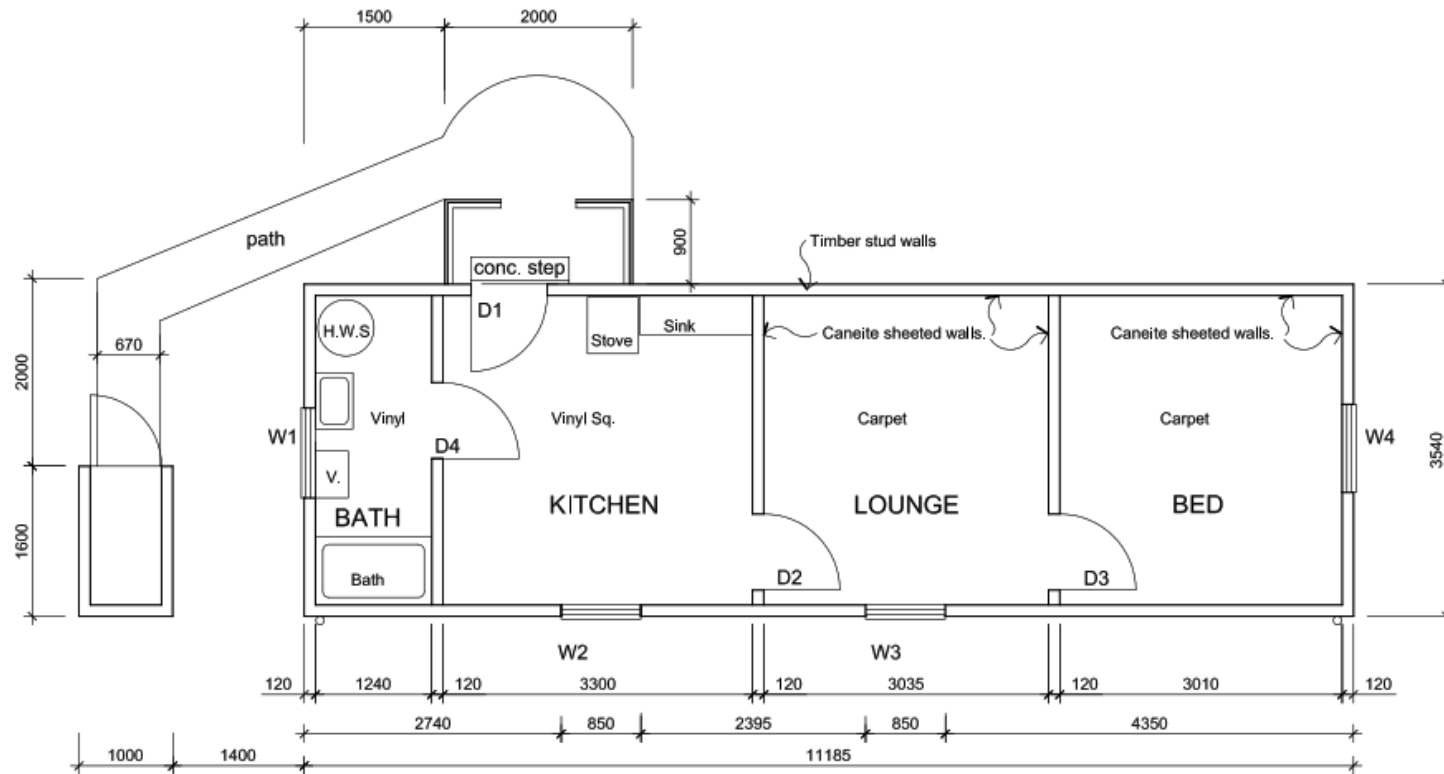
59 George Street
Site Plan

SCALE: 1:50 @ A3
DATE: November 2019
JOB: 2019-08
ARCHITECT: David Wixted reg14233

heritage ALLIANCE Tel: 03 9328 5133
41 COBDEN STREET NORTH MELBOURNE



A-00



Measured Drawing

59 George Street
Existing Plan

SCALE: 1:50 @ A3
DATE: November 2019
JOB: 2019-08
ARCHITECT: David White reg14233

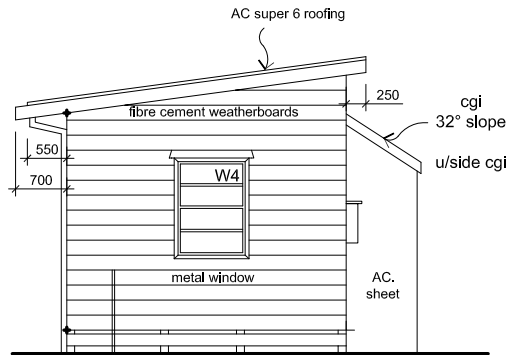
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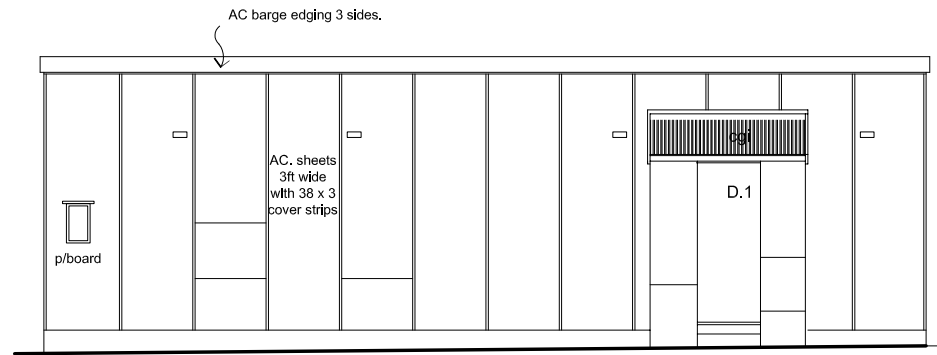
A-01



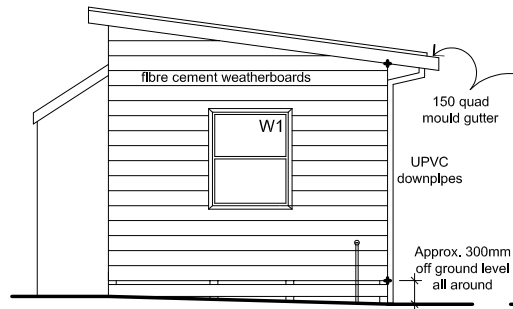
Typological Study St Albans Half-Houses



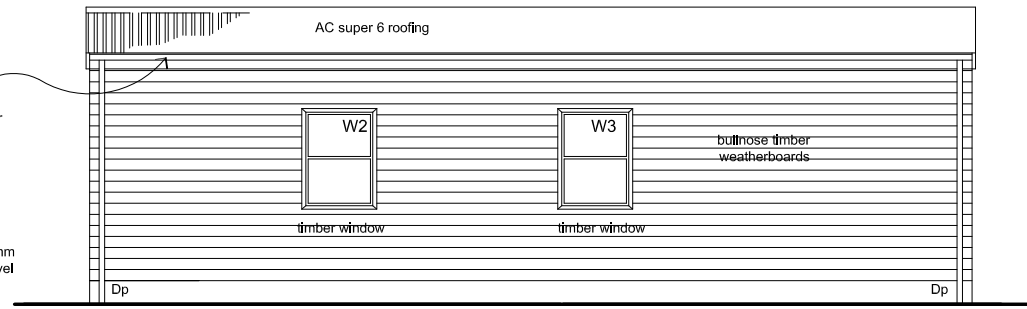
NORTH ELEVATION
Scale 1:50 @ A3



WEST ELEVATION
Scale 1:50 @ A3



SOUTH ELEVATION
Scale 1:50 @ A3



EAST ELEVATION
Scale 1:50 @ A3

Measured Drawing

59 George Street
Existing Elevations

SCALE: 1:50 @ A3
DATE: November 2019
JOB: 2019-08
ARCHITECT: David Wixted reg14233

heritage ALLIANCE Tel: 03 9328 5133
41 COBDEN STREET NORTH MELBOURNE



A-02



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5.0 SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Historical Significance

The St Albans half-houses are historically significant because they document in a very tangible way, a number of historical themes around migration, home making and suburb development. These historical themes illustrate the development of St Albans from a tiny farming settlement in 1947 to the diverse community it is today. European migration post-WW2 saw the population of St Albans grow tenfold, in a rapid and largely unregulated manner. These new residents lived in tiny, temporary houses, that in many cases they had built themselves, at a time of desperate housing shortages. The surviving half-houses demonstrate the desperate state of many migrant families during the post-war housing crisis in Australia and the response of Keilor Shire, to relax building regulations to increase house supply and land availability. The development and adaptation of half-houses from a freestanding timber dwelling, to later being part of brick and tile, and weatherboard villas, demonstrates the growth and establishment of the suburb of St Albans.

5.2 Architectural Significance

The St Albans half-houses are significant as an example of vernacular design of temporary housing which was necessitated by post-war material shortages, labour shortages and a relaxation of local building regulations to allow for the construction of temporary or part dwellings. They are reflective of a very particular moment where necessity was the mother of invention. The design of the half-houses was based on the easiest possible unit to build, using the least amount of cheap available materials and which provided immediate protection but little comfort. It was a design which presaged the future whole house, a complete gable or even a hipped roof at front and the little skillion tacked on at the back. The half-house illustrates a time of change in building typology and design and it exists today in a number of different forms across St Albans. The half-houses as a phenomenon has had a long term effect on the building typologies of St Albans and the appearance of the suburb.

5.3 Social Significance

The St Albans half-houses are of social significance to the post-war migrant community of St Albans and their descendants. The half-houses formed an integral part of the migration story of many St Albans families who had arrived from war-torn Europe. The co-operative construction of the half-houses by owner builders assisted in cementing friendships and community ties, forging bonds and happy memories at a time when most families were under enormous stress. The collective experience of establishing a new community in an alien place and the opportunity to create a new home forged a sense of achievement and as a result, the half-house is remembered with fondness and nostalgia, pride and wonder.



6.0 TYPOLOGY

6.1 Identification methodology

The identification of half-houses in St Albans today has been made much easier through the use of GIS technology and applications such as Google Streetview. Because half-houses were constructed in fairly predictable and recognisable dimensions, with skillion roofs clad in asbestos sheet or corrugated iron, it is not difficult to recognise them on aerial imagery, in the sea of hipped tile roofs which predominate in St Albans.

Aerial photographs from the 1950s and 1960s show half-houses regularly laid out on subdivisions which have retained much the same pattern, although two-lot residential subdivision has reduced some allotment sizes. This means that for many parts of St Albans, one can predict if half-houses will be present by cross checking the historic aerials with Council's GIS.

In some areas of St Albans, as detailed in the case studies in section 2, half-houses were constructed by real estate agents on every allotment of some subdivisions. Historical photos indicate that these were identical houses sited in the same position on each allotment. One can therefore make predictive models of where concentrated areas of half-houses might still exist. In St Albans West, the subdivision around Shirley and Thomas Streets makes an excellent example as there are 9 half-houses here which are still recognisable. These streets were subdivided in 1951 and the first half-houses constructed on site before 1954. The extant housing in this area reflects the evolution of the half-houses into more permanent larger homes.

Aerial photos indicate that there was a rapid rate of change and alteration of the houses and oral history supports that the houses were altered and extended almost from the moment they were occupied. This has meant that half-houses which survive in their original built form, are now very rare.

Historic aerial photos show a rapid change in the quantity of housing constructed between 1954 and 1956. It also shows the pattern of subdivision developing further to the east and the north-east of the railway line. Between 1956 and 1962 there was a similarly rapid change in the nature of that housing, with areas that were mostly half-houses, now showing hipped tile and iron roofs with the occasional half-house between them.

The 1968 aerial indicates subdivision development to the west and further to the north-east, and consolidation of allotments in established areas. The majority of half-houses built in the 1950s appear to have been altered and extended, but there are new areas of half-houses in the new periphery of the suburb to the north-east and north-west.

6.2 Types and variants

In defining and describing the half-houses for the purposes of this report, the consultants have applied the taxonomy adopted by Heritage Victoria, which assigns groups (referred to as categories) to places. The half-houses of Brimbank are part of a specific sub-category of the group called *Residential buildings (private)*. This taxonomy is useful when describing or comparing the half-houses with other residential buildings in the Victorian Heritage Database. The database has numerous fields, categories and themes by which heritage places are sorted and categorised. For the purposes of this report they fit into; **Group Residential Buildings (private) – Sub-category Residence**

The half-houses, being small, temporary and built at a specific time and place, do not easily fit the categories of places devised by Heritage Victoria. The sub-category – Residence is the only category in which the half-houses fit, and even then, they are unique in that sub-category.

There is a sub-category- Bungalow, but it is clear from the other places in this category (mostly Federation and Inter-War houses) that the half-houses do not fit into it. This is another reason that the half-houses should not be termed bungalows as it hampers the ability to properly compare the half-houses against other similar housing types in Victoria.

The other way of defining the half-houses and achieving some comparative data on them as a sub-type, is via architectural style. The half-houses whilst mostly owner built, lacking the design input of an architect or even a



builder in most cases, could be defined as **Mid-Twentieth Century c.1940-1960 Austerity** which is a style that reflected a lack of building materials and labour in the years following World War II. However given the existing places in this style category, tile roofed, weatherboard houses of 4 or more rooms, they do not fit here either.

As the half-houses were renovated and extended and some were attached to the rear of new buildings, their style changed to become a part of a new building, many of which would fit into the Mid-Twentieth Century c.1940-1960 Austerity. As stand alone half-houses however, they do not. The closest we can come to a possible description of the style of the half-houses is - Mid-Twentieth Century c.1945-1970 Temporary migrant housing.

In order to come to some understanding of how unusual or unique the half-houses of St Albans are, a quick comparison of similar groups, styles and sub-categories in the Victorian Heritage Database shows that there are two other similar housing types which were used in the post-war period in Brimbank. These include;

A single *Operation Snail House* in 25 Adelaide Street, Sunshine, which is included in the HO24 McKay Housing Estate- King Edward Avenue, and some early 1950s concrete houses within the ICI Housing Estate Precinct, Sunshine (not in the Heritage Overlay). There are no temporary, part-house types in the database in Brimbank or any other municipality.

6.3 Variations within the type

From fieldwork and aerial survey, there would appear to be three primary forms of the St Albans half-house, which are described below as Group 1, 2 and 3 and have a number of common characteristics:

- **Group 1** are half-houses located on their original allotment, free-standing, timber framed, skillion roofed(excepting 74 Vincent Ave which has a hipped roof), with cement sheet wall cladding, two or three rooms arranged in a linear manner and in use as a primary dwelling. The form and fabric reflect their original purpose as a temporary part-dwelling.
- **Group 2** are free-standing, timber framed, skillion roofed, dome are reclad with newer materials, such as corrugated iron. Some have been shifted to a different position on the block, and in use as a secondary dwelling or outbuilding. The form and fabric reflect their original purpose as a temporary part-dwelling, which has been repurposed.
- **Group 3** are no longer free-standing but have been built into a newer house, reclad with newer materials, weatherboard or cement sheet, may have newer roof at different, or extended pitch and new window openings and are used as part of a primary dwelling. The form reflects the original intent and purpose, that the structure become part of a larger dwelling.

Group 1 half-houses, of which there were only 8 identified in the course of this study, includes the largely intact examples of 12 Shirley Street and 59 George Street, where the half-house retains the majority of its original wall and roof material, is located in its original position on the allotment and has one cement sheet clad façade with minimal openings and no eaves. The most important element of this group of half-houses, is that the original intent of the building, to be a temporary or part-dwelling, can still be interpreted in the design and fabric of the structure.



Figure 23 Group 1 half house in Shirley Street. Source, heritage Alliance 2019

This group also includes the anomalous example of 74 Vincent Avenue, which is a hipped roof form of the half-house in its original position and retaining most of its original cladding materials. This is included in Group 1 because it was built as a half-house and its form still reflects its temporary or unfinished nature.



Figure 24 Group 1 half-house with a striking half-hipped roof. Source, heritage Alliance 2019

Group 2 half-houses, of which there were 39 identified during the course of this study, are identified as secondary dwellings or outbuildings, on an allotment with a primary dwelling which is separate. An example of this is 83

Oberon Avenue, which is located to the rear of a main dwelling and appears to be used for storage. This example has been reclad with metal sheet, but it retains most of the form, dimensions and recognisable characteristics of a half-house, that has been re-purposed.



Figure 25 Group 2 half-house on Oberon Street. Source, heritage Alliance 2019



Figure 26 Group 2 half-house in a backyard. Source, heritage Alliance 2019

Group 3 half-houses of which there were 79 identified during the course of this study, are the group that is hardest to identify clearly. It is probable that the number identified in this study could be well below the actual number, and that most owners do not even recognise the existence of a former half-house within their homes.

This group is the one which reflects the original intent of the half-house to become a part of another, larger house. Some half-houses were added to the rear of brick or weatherboard houses as a sleep-out, sunroom or laundry such as the example in Figure 28. Some formed a major part of a timber-framed house such as the example shown in Figure 27 in Shirley Street. This example demonstrates the unique typology of housing in St Albans and the influence of the half-house in creating one-off house designs. This house has an extended roof at the same pitch as the original half-house section, recessed the front room to create a porch and large window openings to the street façade.



Figure 27 Group 3 half-house in Shirley Street. Source heritage Alliance 2019



Figure 28 Group 3 Half-house attached to the rear of a weatherboard and tile house. Source, heritage Alliance 2019

6.4 Integrity and rarity

As the half-house was meant to be adapted and extended and was often constructed in a way that allowed it to be relocated, the structure is by nature, an adaptable form. The issue of the integrity of the half-houses is however still important as it can provide information on representative examples of the type.

Table 1, indicates the number of each Group located during this study and the integrity and rarity of each Group. Integrity and rarity are terms which describe and qualify the fabric of a place. Intactness refers to the degree to which a place or object retains its significant fabric. Intactness should not be confused with condition – a place may be highly intact but the fabric may be in a very fragile condition.

Integrity refers to the degree to which the heritage values of the place or object are still evident and can be understood and appreciated. If considerable change to a place or object has occurred the significant values may not be readily identifiable and the place or object may have low-level integrity. With half-houses, changes in the wall or roof cladding do not necessarily reduce integrity, but the insertion of new windows and doors might.

At the time of assessment in Spring 2019, we have identified three different levels of half-house integrity; high, medium and low. Integrity of fabric is NOT the same as the rarity of occurrence and although there appears to be some synchronicity between rarity and integrity, it is not a causal relationship. For the rare places with high integrity, this relationship is a direct one, but when discussing Medium and Low integrity examples, assigning levels of rarity is less clear cut. (The rarity of the half-houses in St Albans is assessed as the rarity in St Albans, not the rarity of half-houses as a place type in Melbourne or Victoria.)

Groups 1 and 2 can have very high integrity, even though Group 2 might have a newer house crowding it on the same block. Some of these Group 2 half-houses are still located in the same spot they were built and have intact original fabric.

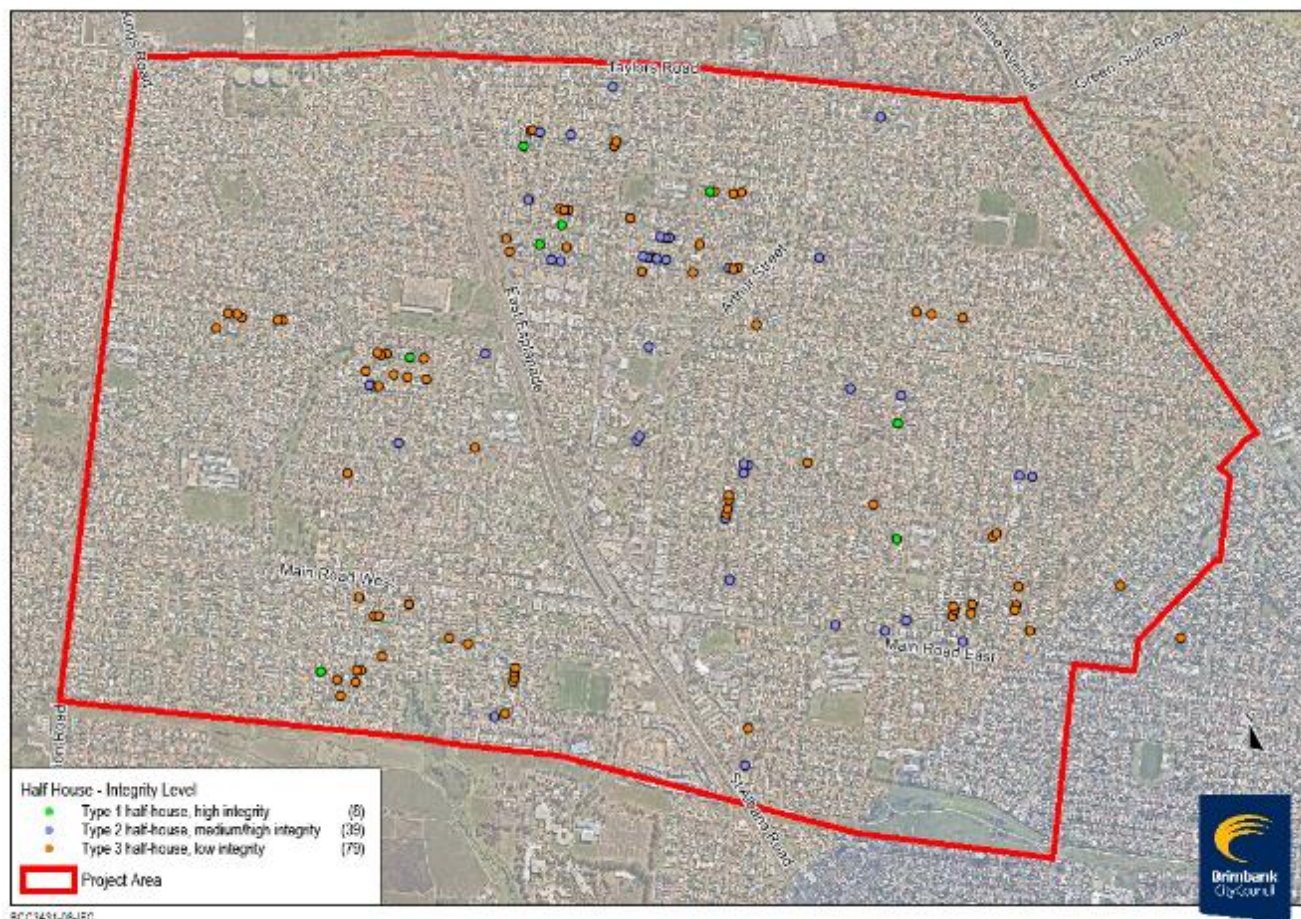
Group 3 half-houses have been extended or added to a newer brick and tile or weatherboard house as originally planned. These are now only partially discernible in the built fabric, such as 22, 24 and 26 Shirley Street. Very few Group 3 half-houses have high intactness or integrity as the extension of them into another house has necessarily destroyed part of the original fabric and design.

Table 1: Half-house rarity and integrity

Group	Examples identified	Integrity	Rarity	Definition	Examples
1	8	High	Rare	In original location, free-standing and used as primary dwelling.	12 Shirley St, 108 George Street, 59 George Street, 22 Charles Street, 16 Washington Street
2	39	Medium/High	Infrequent	On original allotment but used as secondary dwelling or out-building.	83 Oberon Avenue, 19 Ruth Street, 55 Kate Street, 86 Vincent Avenue
3	79	Low	Common	Adapted, renovated, built into another primary dwelling.	13 Thomas Street, 127 Alfreda Street, 5, 7, 9 McArthur Avenue

6.5 Mapping and modelling

The following map has been compiled using a combination of desktop aerial image survey, community information, fieldwork and desktop Google Streetview. The map shows the occurrence of the three types of half-houses across St Albans. Appendix A provides a table of these, sorted by group and address.





8.0 SUMMARY

The half-houses of St Albans are a fascinating snapshot of the post-war development of St Albans and the multi-cultural and vibrant community that it became. The half-house phenomenon is not unique to St Albans, but occurs in other areas of the western suburbs as well; Footscray, Braybrook, Sunshine and Albion and possibly other places such as Deer Park, Tottenham and Maribyrnong. The large number of half-houses identified during the writing of this report, over 100, indicates the concentration of this housing form in St Albans, in three identifiable Groups.

- **Group 1** are half-houses located on their original allotment, free-standing, timber framed, skillion roofed(excepting 74 Vincent Ave which has a hipped roof), with cement sheet wall cladding, two or three rooms arranged in a linear manner and in use as a primary dwelling. The form and fabric reflect their original purpose as a temporary part-dwelling.
- **Group 2** are free-standing, timber framed, skillion roofed, dome are reclad with newer materials, such as corrugated iron. Some have been shifted to a different position on the block, and in use as a secondary dwelling or outbuilding. The form and fabric reflect their original purpose as a temporary part-dwelling, which has been repurposed.
- **Group 3** are no longer free-standing but have been built into a newer house, reclad with newer materials, weatherboard or cement sheet, may have newer roof at different, or extended pitch and new window openings and are used as part of a primary dwelling. The form reflects the original intent and purpose, that the structure become part of a larger dwelling.

These three Groups and each half-house identified during this study has been mapped and a list is provided in Appendix A.

The St Albans community has a great sentimental attachment to the stories of the half-houses and the migrant history they reveal. This is evident in the oral histories of the suburb, published sources, collections of photos found on the internet, and the enthusiasm with which many people embraced this study. Many people believe that the half-houses have made the St Albans community distinct, and in some ways this is true and should be seen as a chance to educate the community about this important story. It is clear that the half-houses provide an excellent opportunity for a celebration of the story of migration in the City and the continuing role of migrants in forming the unique community of St Albans today.



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Appendix A

Table 2 List of half-houses by type, identified in fieldwork and aerial image survey, as at September 2019.

Group 1 half-house, high integrity	Group 2 half-house, medium/high integrity	Group 3 half-house, low integrity
22 Charles Street	8 Arthur Street	160 Alfreda Street
96 Conrad Street	10 Arthur Street	46 Andrea Street
59 George Street	69 Avondale Avenue	12 Andrew Road
108 George Street	188 Biggs Street	14 Andrew Road
12 Shirley Street	33 Charles Street	28 Andrew Road
74 Vincent Avenue	-	29 Andrew Road
16 Washington Street	30 Conrad Street	30 Andrew Road
37 Lester Avenue	63 Conrad Street	34 Andrew Road
	68 Conrad Street	6 Avondale Avenue
	70 Conrad Street	13 Avondale Avenue
	72 Conrad Street	15 Avondale Avenue
	77 Conrad Street	23 Avondale Avenue
	81 Conrad Street	48 Clarke Avenue
	83 Conrad Street	59 Conrad Street
	85 Conrad Street	61 Conrad Street
	87 Conrad Street	62 Conrad Street
	1 Craiglee Avenue	107 Conrad Street
	3 Craiglee Avenue	74 East Esplanade
	24 Erica Avenue	80 East Esplanade
	2 Helen Street	5 Eisner Street
	84 Helen Street	15 Eisner Street
	74 Henry Street	21 Eisner Street
	78 Henry Street	26 Erica Avenue
	70 Ivanhoe Avenue	28 Erica Avenue
	55 Kate Street	32 Erica Avenue
	4 Lester Avenue	34 Erica Avenue
	-	30 Errington Road
	196 Main Road East	139 Fox Street
	222 Main Road East	147 Fox Street
	242 Main Road East	149 Fox Street
	83 Oberon Avenue	151 Fox Street
	39 Percy Street	45 George Street
	127 Power Street	49 George Street
	131 Power Street	57 George Street
	19 Ruth Street	11 Glendenning Street
	2 Scott Avenue	13 Glendenning Street
	26 Thomas Street	15 Glendenning Street
	28 Thomas Street	17 Glendenning Street

	11 View Street	12 Grist Street
	43 View Street	17 Grist Street
	86 Vincent Avenue	20 Grist Street
		54A Henry Street
		60 Henry Street
		43 Ivanhoe Avenue
		45 Ivanhoe Avenue
		33 James Street
		14 Kate Street
		25 Kate Street
		8 Kodre Street
		17 Kodre Street
		19 Kodre Street
		28 Kodre Street
		7 Leonard Avenue
		9 Leonard Avenue
		10 Leonard Avenue
		11 Leonard Avenue
		14 Leonard Avenue
		49 Milawa Avenue
		32 Pennell Avenue
		35 Pennell Avenue
		31 Percy Street
		133 Power Street
		135 Power Street
		3 Shirley Street
		6 Shirley Street
		11 Shirley Street
		17 Shirley Street
		22 Shirley Street
		24 Shirley Street
		26 Shirley Street
		29 Shirley Street
		44 Station Avenue
		24 Thomas Street
		89 Theodore Street
		91 Theodore Street
		12 Vule Street
		13 Vule Street
		15 Vule Street
		170 William Street

