

1950 - 1970

MODERN BEACH HOMES



Friday 13th January - Sunday 26th February



Dr. James Curry explores the allure of seaside living in a changing South Australia, after World War II.

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MODERN BEACH HOMES

Modern Beach Homes 1950 - 1970 explores the allure of the architect designed beach house, in a changing South Australia after World War II.

Increased leisure hours, disposable income, use of the car and development of infrastructure, transformed Adelaide's southern coastal region through growing concentrations of modern beach homes, with Victor Harbor – *'The Bay of Naples in miniature'* – its premier resort town.

A booming and industrialising economy, led to the desire for the enjoyment and celebration of a leisure and tourist culture in which a new generation devolved status, whilst defining themselves through modern architecture.

- * *Who were these people and what inspired them to commission a modern, artistically furnished, architect-designed beach house, attuned to the scenic surroundings?*
- * *What were their backgrounds and what was their social network?*
- * *What was their relationship with their beach homes, in which they sought a 'break' from everyday life?*

During a period of an expanding market of holiday homemakers, the allure of the modern beach home is presented under the themes of *'Openness And Exposure'*, *'Privacy'* and *'Shared Sensibilities'*. Together they provide a window into a changing social space, whilst revealing a potential in alternative ways of living.

Bringing together photographs, drawings, plans, newspaper and magazine articles, from the City of Victor Harbor, State Library of South Australia, as well as private family records and other organisations. The exhibition displays a diverse range of work by Architects; John Chappel, Brian Vogt, Marjorie Simpson, James Hall, Dean Berry, Stephen Gilbert, Sir James Irwin and Caradoc Aston, Fisher, Woodhead & Beaumont Smith.

Modern Beach Homes 1950 - 1970 is presented by

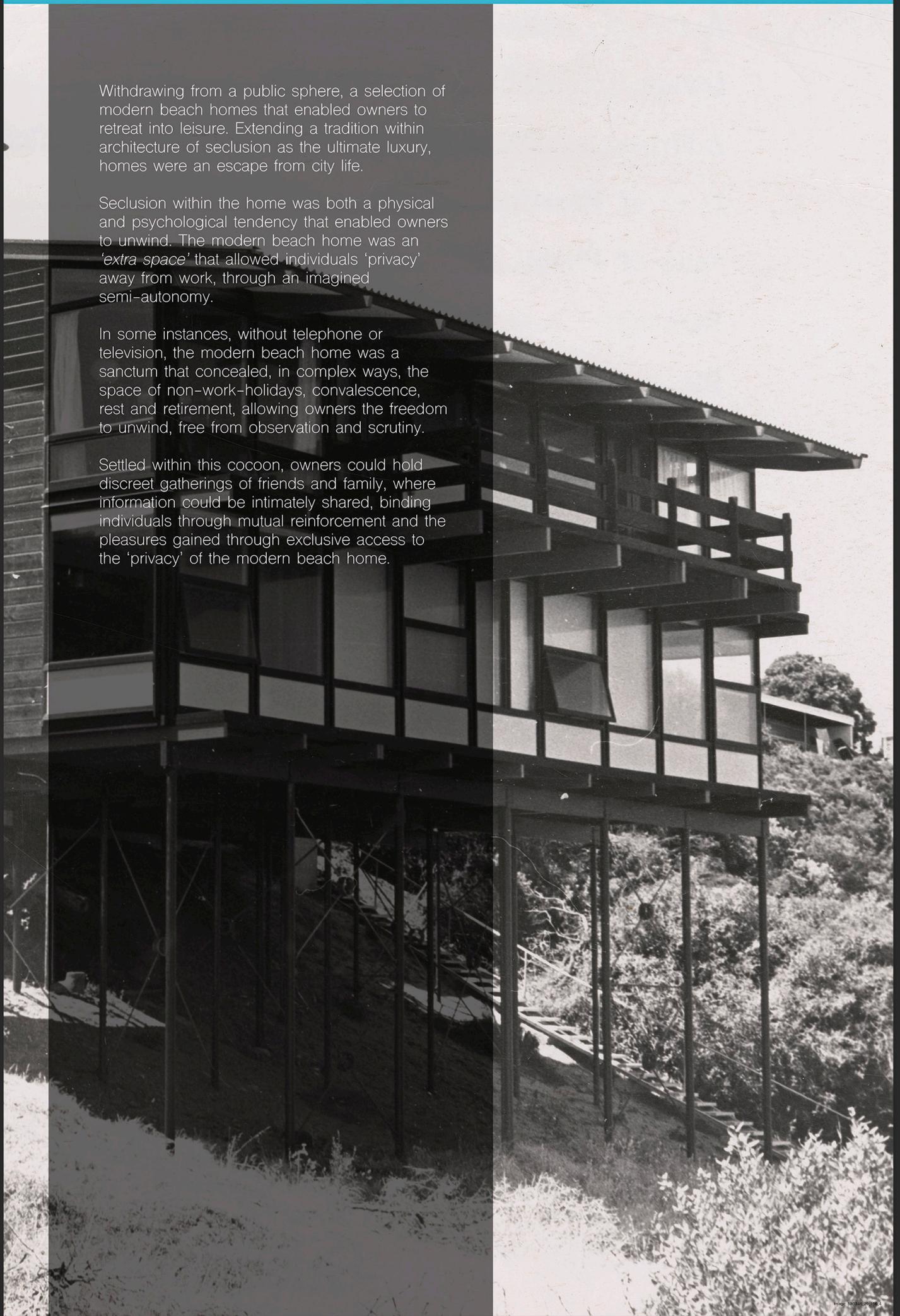
Dr. James Curry
University of South Australia

Withdrawing from a public sphere, a selection of modern beach homes that enabled owners to retreat into leisure. Extending a tradition within architecture of seclusion as the ultimate luxury, homes were an escape from city life.

Seclusion within the home was both a physical and psychological tendency that enabled owners to unwind. The modern beach home was an 'extra space' that allowed individuals 'privacy' away from work, through an imagined semi-autonomy.

In some instances, without telephone or television, the modern beach home was a sanctuary that concealed, in complex ways, the space of non-work-holidays, convalescence, rest and retirement, allowing owners the freedom to unwind, free from observation and scrutiny.

Settled within this cocoon, owners could hold discreet gatherings of friends and family, where information could be intimately shared, binding individuals through mutual reinforcement and the pleasures gained through exclusive access to the 'privacy' of the modern beach home.



IRWIN BEACH HOUSE

1956

LOCATION Aldinga

ARCHITECT Sir James Irwin



Regarded as 'a gentle gentleman', Sir James Irwin achieved many accomplishments in a range of areas; Promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel during WW2, architect, Lord Mayor, alderman, President of the Institute of Architects, President of the South Australian branch of Toc H and member of the Adelaide Club, in which he was club architect.

Knighted 1971, Irwin is best known for designing the former Advertiser Newspapers Ltd building (1959) and buildings for General Motors Holden's Pty Ltd at Woodville and at Elizabeth.

Built in 1956 when he was at the age of 51 and a partner of Woods, Bagot, Laybourne Smith and Irwin, Irwin Beach house became 'the pride of this rapidly growing settlement of Adlinga' (Chappel). Shared with his wife Kathleen Orr (Lady Irwin) and their two children, the home was located 30 miles from their family home in Bernard Street, North Adelaide, in what was then a rural setting. According to Irwin, he 'built the house as a retreat for the family'.

Irwin socialised and shared information at Aldinga with Colin Gordon, headmaster of the Collegiate School of St Peter, Adelaide, who lived nearby. The first layman to hold the position, Gordon exemplified the classic headmaster of an English public school.

Within his memoir, Irwin recounts the time spent at the home:

'...originally it was a beautiful remote spot near our great friends Colin and Pat Gordon; when we sold it, it was in the middle of a suburb. But we loved it, finding it a lifesaver during the frantically busy years, and we refused to have a telephone...'

A less observable area in which to have a beach home, it allowed Irwin to loosen up in ways impossible in the city. Without telephone, the Irwin beach house had an autonomy and seclusion among the rural setting, which concealed the ultimate luxury of non-work, holidays, convalescence, rest and retirement, even for one of the city's most prominent figures.



PRIVACY

SHEARER BEACH HOUSE 1966

LOCATION Hayborough

ARCHITECT John Chappel



The Shearer house was modern living at its finest. Commissioned by Alwyn and Bess Shearer, for their family of 4 boys, they were descendants of the Shearer family, who were prominent South Australian agricultural machinery makers and inventors, most notably with the wrought-steel ploughshares.

The Shearer house was designed in 1966 only to be put on hold. With the project in abeyance, Chappel rethought the project and presented it to the Shearers gaining their approval. Along with Chappel's nearby 'Ling Beach House 1967 (Openness and Exposure)', the home is capacious for a holiday house with space dedicated to entertainment and novelties, while securing the right place carrying value.



Distributed over 3 levels, the home establishes a topographic relation in section to its cliff-like setting above the beach, while offering a less observable place to spend leisure time within the dress circle of Hayborough: Up at street level, a discreet entry through the garage contains boat and car storage for three vehicles; a mid-level consisting of living, games room and combined bar-kitchen, with all spaces opening out to a viewing deck overlooking the ocean; with the lowest level containing bedrooms, two bathrooms, laundry and private access to the beach via external stairs.



Built of lightweight materials and suspended on slender steel columns, the home is remarkable given the slope and site restrictions, enhancing the drama of the setting whilst preserving the shrub covered hillside. Rooms gain an uninterrupted view of the beach and sea while maintaining a maximum of privacy for both indoor and outdoor living.

The house was sold by Shearer in 1985.



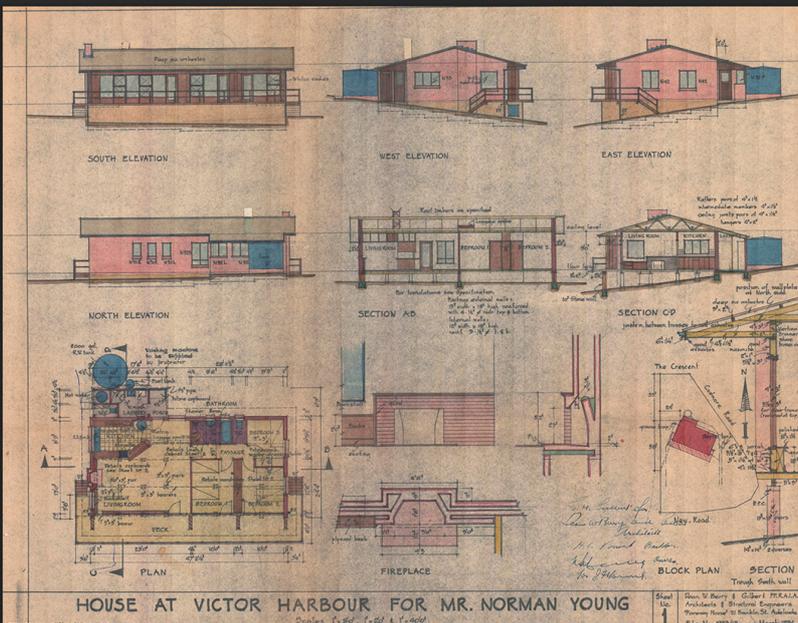
PRIVACY

FAIRBAIRN

1954

LOCATION Adare Park

ARCHITECT Dean W Berry & Gilbert



'A powerful professional' (Stewart Cockburn), Sir Norman Young was a chartered accountant and company director. With the family home in Erindale, Adelaide, Young would stay at 'Fairbairn' with his wife Jean, daughter of prominent public servant John Sincock, and their three children, Janet, Jim and Tom.

Young commissioned the home for £4,000 when he was 43. Located towards the rear of a prominent corner block, the home commands splendid views over the harbour. Planning was both efficient and compact, with a 'cleanness of line and simplicity of treatment' (John Chappel). Concealed roof trusses supported at one end by a glazed window-wall, allowed a combined kitchen, breakfast bar and living area that opened out to an outdoor floating deck, used for entertaining and enjoying the views.

Surrounded by cool lawns and gardens, the house was informally furnished with cane furniture and heavy coir matting. Externally, emphasis was on the horizontal, with brick joints raked horizontally and materials selected for their durability and minimal upkeep.

During 'Fairbairn's' construction, Young was on the board at Elder Smith, SA Brewing and Macquarie Broadcasting Company of Sydney which held a majority holding in 5DN station. As News Limited held a minority interest. Young first came in contact with Rupert Murdoch during this period who had then gained the ascendancy within the News Ltd Board.

According to Young, 'out of the blue, [Murdoch] turned up one day at our Victor Harbor home in company with a young blonde lady called Pat Booker. Jean and I were simultaneously introduced and told by Rupert that he and Pat had agreed to get married. With this formality behind him he asked whether he might telephone his mother in Victoria and give her the glad tidings which he did. Lady Murdoch (as she was then) handled this piece of information with quite remarkable calm.'

Patricia Booker, a model and air hostess, married Murdoch at Scots Presbyterian Church, North Terrace in 1956.

PRIVACY

Page 12 - The Commercial Appeal, Dallas, Tex., 11/19/56

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IRWIN BEACH HOUSE 1956

Page 14 - The Commercial Appeal, Dallas, Tex., 11/19/56

HOMES AND BUILDING
Beach House Gives Coastal View

What else could give such an exciting 'lift' to homes built to new design trends?

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Hardies BUILDING PRODUCTS
 FIBROLITE-HARDIFLEX-VERSILUX-TILLEX

SHEARER BEACH HOUSE 1966

Page 14 - The Commercial Appeal, Dallas, Tex., 11/19/56

Weather-master
 CANVAS BLINDS

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FAIRBAIRN 1954

OPENNESS AND EXPOSURE

MODERN
BEACH HOMES

Within the reception of modern architecture in Adelaide, it is important to consider the role played by owners, in seeking to achieve a renewal of lifestyle and social identity after WWII. In the post-war period the height of aspirational style, was owning an architect-designed, artistically furnished beach house in Victor Harbor. Consequently, some of the most significant modern beach homes were commissioned by well-known Adelaide family names, associated with the rising professional and business elite.

The modern beach home was a new house type, shifting boundaries that determined the relationship between inside and outside, public and private. There was a tendency for 'openness and exposure', displacing the traditional sense of the enclosed inside space.

Facilitating connections to the surrounding landscape, plans were compact and had an ease of use, and with minimal internal partitions, the surroundings could be seen from all parts of the home. The shift away from a traditional sense of enclosure became manifest in devices such as the window-wall, which blurred the boundary of inside and outside, and the picture window, which made the outside view consumable.

Materials were implicated in the concern with exposure to salt laden air, abrasive wind, sand and hot summer sun, so applied surface finishes were avoided. Like clothing, the role of a building's enclosure was protection. Practical, austere and unadorned, the treatment of interior and exterior surfaces was reduced to the essentials, minimising the need for maintenance and upkeep whilst preserving the owner's leisure time whilst on holiday.

The tendency for 'openness and exposure' was tied to scenes where there was a devolution of status, in which owners '*loosened up*' in ways that were rarely possible in the city, and the extra space afforded through the modern beach home was both physical and mental, as relaxed owners were less concerned with being noticed.



GROSE BEACH HOUSE

1965

LOCATION Victor Harbor

ARCHITECT Brian Vogt

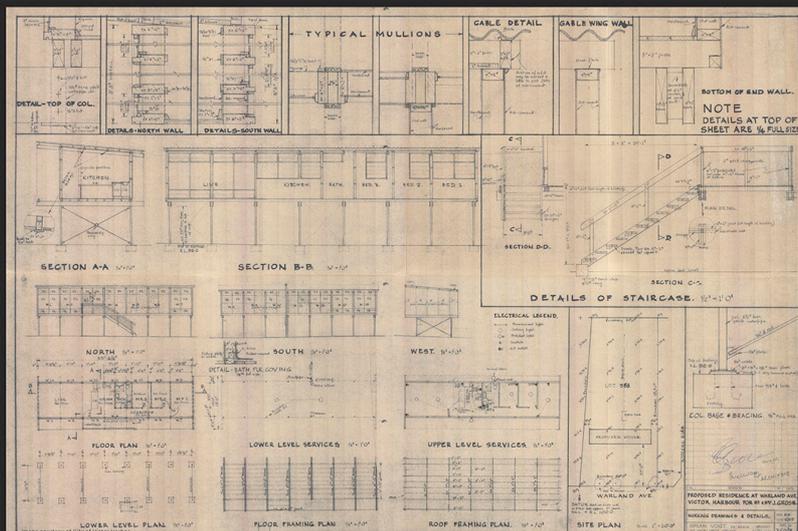


The Grose holiday house was a dramatic departure from the owners traditional 1890's Adelaide home in College Park. Constructed for £2,500, the house is elevated above the site and supported on slender steel columns providing the home with unimpeded views of the surrounding landscape. With the main floor level raised 6ft, space was provided for undercover car parking and outdoor activities. In keeping with the feeling of openness to the surroundings, the house was organized one room deep, with the advantage that rooms had views on the north and south while operable glass louvers ensured spaces had cross ventilation and caught sea breezes.

Vogt was president of the local Modular Society. As such, the home is arranged on a 7'10" module, with the idea that the house was 'assembled' like a kit of parts on site rather than constructed. Assembled out of asbestos cement sheet, glass, louver sashes and timber, materials were selected for their durability and left exposed free of finish for minimal upkeep.



Interior arrangement is mainly undivided so that the surroundings can be seen from all parts of the house. Exposed rafters accentuate the ceiling while furnishings had a textured and casual informality consisting of seagrass matting, strawboard ceilings, plasterboard walls and woven curtains.

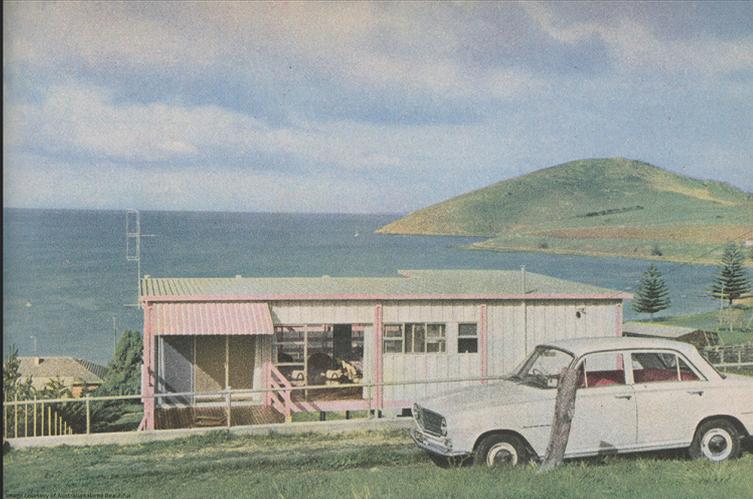


OPENNESS AND EXPOSURE

HOUSE FOR A BACHELOR 1961

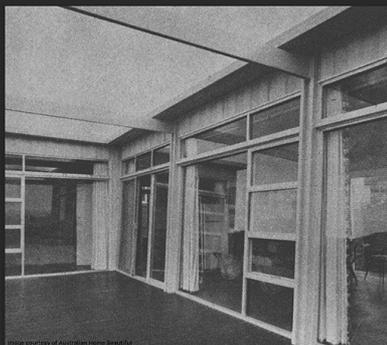
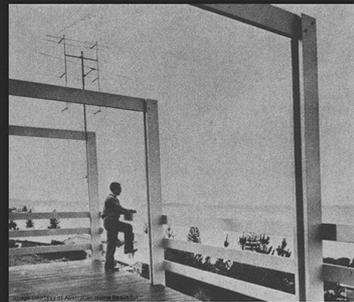
LOCATION Encounter Bay

ARCHITECT Marjorie Simpson, Small Home Service (S.H.S)



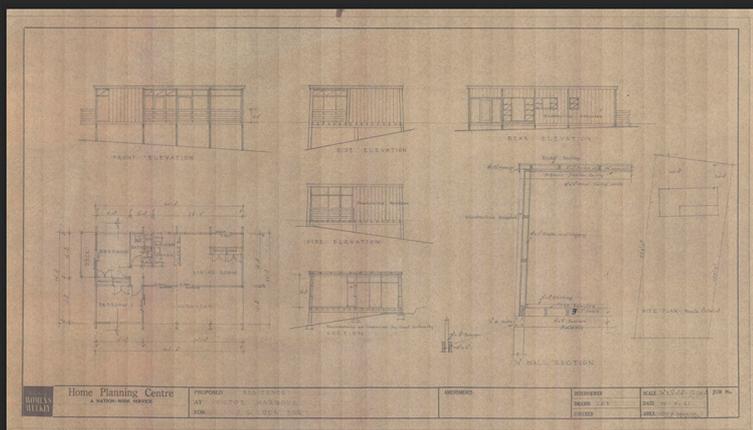
John Lock was a company secretary for Lock Motors in St Morris, Adelaide. His bachelor pad was featured alongside two other beach side holiday homes in 1961 within The Australian Women's Weekly. Elevated above the slope in Encounter Bay, the home features a wide veranda, large windows and 'stilt construction' for 'maximum coolness.' According to the article, the home was evidence that 'in the type of holiday homes now going up in Australia, there are significant pointers to a brighter and better level of architecture generally in our homes.'

After taking up the directorship of the Small Home Service in 1957, Marjorie Simpson approached Sir Frank Packer of the Australian Women's Weekly and was successful in having Small Homes Service take over a plan service in his magazine. Emerging out of this relationship, the Lock house was built for £3,500. The house consists of a large living and kitchen area, with bench containing sink and stove, a combined toilet and laundry, and spacious bedrooms. The plan layout has an economy and flexibility of use as Locks married brother and sister, and their families would share the use of the home. Open to views of Rosetta Head, Encounter Bay, Wright Island, Granite Island and 1836 Rumbelow Cottage, the house is sited southeast with its back to the road. With the living room walled with glass, a veranda runs full-length on its eastern side open to views and for entertaining.



Locks bachelor pad stages a performance through the treatment of interior and exterior wall surfaces in which the integrity of the house showcases an austerity and a concern with style. Materials, left free from dressing, in which they were naked and unadorned, included unpainted deck roof, asbestos cement cladding and oiled decking boards. All windows are aluminium, with painting limited to exposed post and beams which were coloured light pink. Internally, floors were covered in cork, hardboards for walls and worktops, with the kitchen and meals area in glass and plastic.

The staging is furthered through a concern with style evidenced both on the interior and exterior. As the house is set high on the steep slope, the front and back walls of the home were sloped inwards to counteract the illusion created by the vertical wall, which appears to tilt forward on a steep slope. Menu cards from famous shipping liners, are set beneath the glass benchtop in the kitchen and meals area. Implicit within the house is that the bachelor's domain was the rugged environment while the domain of the feminine was in the suburbs.



OPENNESS AND EXPOSURE

LING BEACH HOUSE

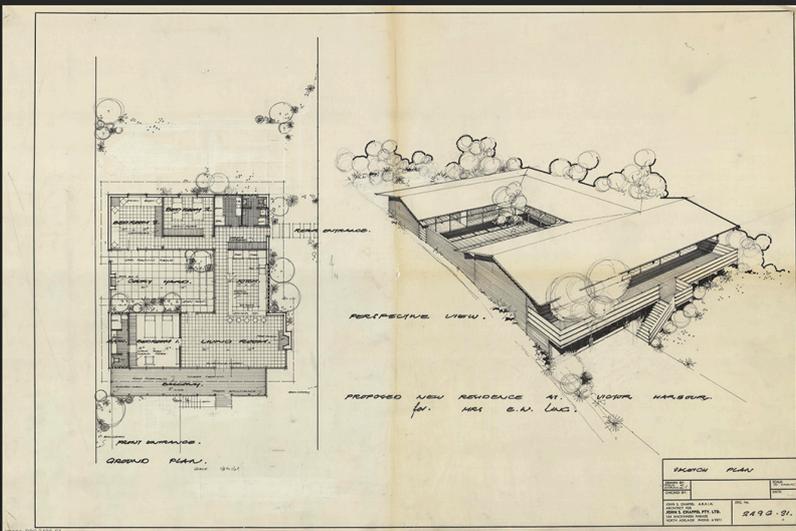
1967

LOCATION McCracken
ARCHITECT John Chappel



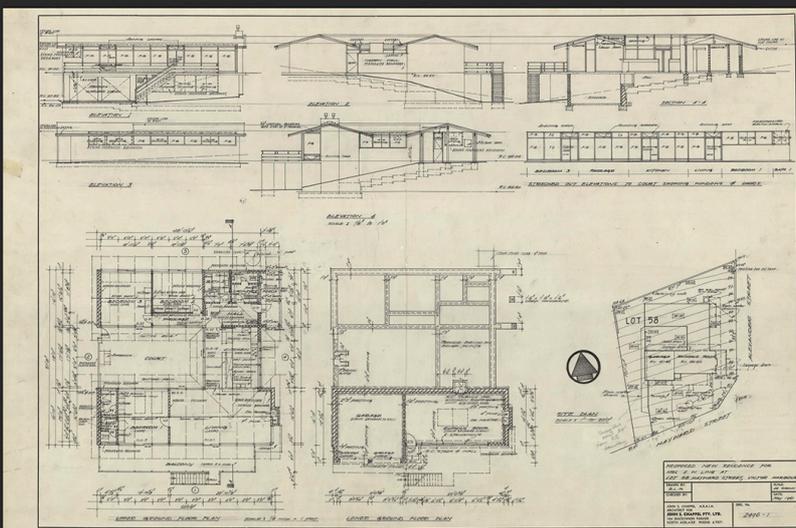
Located among the dress circle of McCracken and Hayborough, this large holiday home was built in 1967 for Eileen Ling in her mid 50s. Ling had 3 children each of which had grown up. Part of the well-known Hills family, Ling was a majority shareholder of Hills Industries, manufacturers of the Hills hoist, TV antennas, and gardening equipment.

The house is Situated on the rear of the block, elevated above the road for unimpeded panoramic views of the ocean, and displays John Chappels talents for adapting to client wishes and utilising the potential of a site to suit the desired architecture and mode of living. Organized around standardised construction, components are spaced on a 5ft module in which finishes are durable and informal, and aim to give character to spaces.



The house has large areas of glass which provide connection between the house and landscape. Glazed elements were considered in practical terms, with window-walls shaded by overhangs and positioned to maximise view and orientation. In keeping with the feeling of open, the interior arrangement is mainly undivided so that views of the surroundings can be seen from all parts of the house. A large living / entertaining room and deck floats above the landscape, providing a sense of connection to the outdoors, while suspended between the courtyard and the ocean views to the south.

On holidays the lifestyle is more relaxed and casual, people spend more time outdoors, with spaces in the home more casual and rooms functioning in more than one way. The Ling home had multiple purposes, which included amongst others, entertaining Hills industries professionals. Its use implied freedom in the planning and a prevailing sense of informality. Guests could loosen up in ways that were not possible within the work setting.



Alongside the usual set of domestic spaces, the house had a rumpus room, large entertaining area, outdoor deck, courtyard for sunbathing, a bar for entertaining, two bathrooms and a dual garage in which Ling parked her Mercedes-Benz. Surrounded by summer skies, the beach and landscape, it is harder to imagine a more desirable lifestyle, in which swimming, sailing, sunbathing, skiing, and entertaining were all within easy reach.

OPENNESS AND EXPOSURE