



## Heritage Citation



### Meerawa & Yearinga

#### Key details

**Addresses**

At 12 Lapraik Street, Ascot, Queensland 4010

<b>Type of place</b>	Flat building
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Art Deco
<b>Lot plan</b>	L8_BUP10956; L13_BUP10956; L7_BUP10956; L1_BUP10956; L12_BUP10956 ; L3_BUP10956; L9_BUP10956; L10_BUP10956; L11_BUP10956; L2_BUP10956; L4_BUP10956; L5_BUP10956; L6_BUP10956
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — December 2005
<b>Construction</b>	Walls: Face brick
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic

Meerawa and Yearinga are a fine example of a pair of Art Deco style flats built in 1938 during the interwar period when there was an upsurge in the construction of purpose-built flats in inner-city Brisbane. They are aesthetically significant, retain many original features, and make a fine contribution to the Lapraik Street streetscape.

## History

In November 1937, Edgar Stanley Mann purchased approximately 56 perches of land in Lapraik Street. The street was named after Helen Lapraik, who owned the allotment from 1890 to 1920. In February 1938, Mann applied to the Brisbane City Council to erect flats on the property at a cost of £10,000. The builder, Henry Crouch of Grey Street, Brisbane, built many flats around Brisbane in the interwar period. There are six flats in each block of identical design, 2 on each level and 2 former caretakers rooms at the rear of the property. It appears that Mann himself never lived in the flats, but lived close by in Clayfield.

The mid 1930s was a time of high population growth and housing shortage in Brisbane. In October 1938, the editor of the *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland* commented on the “insistent demand for flats....the people must have homes and these are not being built quickly enough”. Many of the new apartment buildings were built in the inner city suburbs along the tram routes, particularly in New Farm and West End. Several blocks of flats were also built elsewhere along Sandgate Road at Albion and in the vicinity of Kingsford-Smith Drive, Hamilton. The tramline was opened along Sandgate Road through Albion and Clayfield in 1901.

Mann was lucky to secure finance for the construction of Meerawa and Yearinga. Other property developers found that capital was “practically unprocurable”, even though the *Daily Standard* reported in 1936 that there was a keen demand for flats in Brisbane and they provided a good return for the investment. Financiers seemed concerned that the fashion for flats would fade in the future.

With the construction of flats sky-rocketing, the Queensland Institute of Architects called for a review of regulations governing the design, construction and planning of flats to prevent the development of fire hazards

and slums in the city. Council ordinances for residential developments required updating in the era of flats.

Houses in Brisbane had to be built on a block of land that was at least 20 perches, but a loophole in Council ordinances meant that flats could be built on 8 or 9 perches.

There was much debate in Council Chambers and the press about the merits of flats. Some Aldermen argued that since Brisbane had the luxury of space, the ideal of the detached house on a large suburban block should be maintained. Flats were therefore a menace that “deprived children of the fresh air and recreation areas to which they were entitled.” The *Daily Standard* reported a city planner as saying that flats were “not conducive to the rearing of families and were a cause of the falling birth rate” [...] There was a danger that localities, like some parts of Clayfield, might become slum areas.”

The *Courier Mail* speculated that perhaps exorbitant Brisbane City Council rates were restricting working class people from owning a house and garden and preventing Brisbane from becoming the garden capital. Other commentators blamed the rise of flat building on suburban sprawl: obtaining the ideal of the house and garden would force people to move to the outer parts of Brisbane, whereas “the flat dweller can remain near the centre of things, and enjoy all the amenities of civilised life”.

In 1936 Council drafted and adopted new building regulations for flats. The height and building material regulations were significant for Mann’s development. Council stipulated that the height of blocks of flats would be limited to 2 storeys, unless they were built of brick, concrete or other fire resistant materials, and then their height would be limited to three storeys, unless surrounded by permanent open space. The design for Mann’s flats met these requirements. They are excellent examples of the frenzy of flat building in Brisbane in the late 1930s.

It has been suggested that Edgar Stanley Mann bought the land and built the flats in Clayfield to provide accommodation for relatives and friends of patients at the nearby Turravan Hospital. This theory is plausible, as Turravan is a short walk along Sandgate Road from Lapraik Street and accommodation was in short supply for temporary visitors from outside of Brisbane. The presence of two caretakers’ flats would also suggest a high turnover of tenants or residents, however, further research is needed to substantiate the claim.

Meerawa and Yearinga remained as registered flats until 1990. In that year, Kurts Development Limited purchased the buildings, renovated the flats and sold them as strata-titled units. Bathrooms and kitchens in the flats were modernised at this time. The two caretakers units at the back of the property were converted into one two-storey residence. Up until 1990, the ground floor caretaker’s unit contained a communal laundry with an intact boiler. An incinerator with brick chimney still exists in one of the original garages at the rear of the property.

Internally, the flats have decorative plaster ceilings, most of which are in Art Deco geometric style designs, leadlight windows, and extensive timber joinery.

Meerawa and Yearinga are words from a vast Aboriginal lexicon. As Aboriginal languages evolved from an oral tradition, the spelling of the words often varies. Meerawa, may also be spelt Merriwa, and means ‘plenty of grass seed and flour made from it’; or ‘gammon, pretence’. Yearinga may also be spelt Yeringa, and in a South Australian dialect, means ‘cold’. There is no surviving documentation that explains why the flats were named Yearinga or Meerawa or what these words were thought to mean.

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## Statement of significance

## Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

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### Historical

#### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

it is a pair of three-storey brick flats built during the interwar period when there was a surge in the construction of purpose-built flats.

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### Representative

#### CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a pair of purpose-built Art Deco masonry flats constructed with a shared driveway and caretakers' residences.

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### Aesthetic

#### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

for the buildings' stylish Art Deco exteriors and original decorative features including geometrical plaster ceilings and timber joinery.

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## References

1. *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, March 1936 and editorial, 1938
2. Brisbane City Council administration files, licenses and permits for 10 and 12 Lapraik Street, Albion
3. Brisbane City Council Minutes, 1935-36, p.764 & 918 and 1938, p.605
4. Brisbane City Council, 1946 aerial photographs.

5. Brisbane City Council Building Register, February, 1938
6. Cooper, H.M., 1949, Australian Aboriginal Words and their Meanings, South Australian Museum
7. *Daily Standard*, 4 September 1935 & 2 April 1936
8. *The Courier Mail*, 4 September, 1935
9. *The Sunday Mail*, 19 May, 1991
10. *The Sunday Sun*, 21 April, 1991
11. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificates of title and other records.
12. McCarthy, Frederick D., 1952, *New South Wales Aboriginal Place Names and Euphonious Words, with their meanings*, A.H. Pettifer Government Printer

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**Note:** This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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