

Heritage



Le Sommet

Key details

Addresses	At 46 Manly Road, Manly West, Queensland 4179; At 3 Whites Road, Manly West, Queensland 4179
Type of place	House
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	California Bungalow
Lot plan	L3_RP72613
Key dates	Date of Citation — June 2025
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic;

Designed in 1919 by noted Brisbane based architect Eric P. Trewern, *Le Sommet*, a highly intact and representative example of an early California Bungalow in Brisbane, demonstrates the design changes that occurred in Brisbane's domestic architecture in the period between the First and Second World Wars. In this period, architects explored new styles and moved away from the more traditional designs and materials of the late-19th and early 20th Centuries. Trewern, well known for his California Bungalow style houses, and for later popularising Old English and Spanish Mission-style houses in Brisbane, is recognised as operating Brisbane's most successful residential architectural firm between the First and Second World Wars.

History

A history of Manly West

The suburb of Manly West was formerly part of Manly, a seaside suburb located 15 kilometres east of central Brisbane. Located alongside Waterloo Bay, the area is named after Manly in Sydney, New South Wales. The suburb of Manly was split into two in 1975, and Queensland Place Names Board approved the name and boundaries for Manly West on 11 August 1975. More recently, the boundaries between Manly and Manly West were amended in 2018.

The earliest land sales in the Manly area included the establishment of the *Wyvernleigh* homestead and estate by 1862. However, it was not until the sale of the Manly Beach Estate from 1882 onwards that the area developed. Sales on the Manly Beach Estate continued until at least the 1890s. A railway line into Manly was opened in the late-1880s.

While a sugar plantation existed on the Wyvernleigh estate, Manly quickly became a seaside resort and tourist destination for those living closer to Brisbane. This development was driven by improvements in the local transport infrastructure, including railways, roads, and buses. As a result, while Manly's population between 1911 and 1954 remained steady at around 950 people, it significantly increased during the weekends and holidays. However, the development of better transport links to central Brisbane also saw Manly become a desirable place of residence for businesspeople and their families.

Manly formed part of the Town of Wynnum and its forebears until 1925, with much of the area's administrative functions existing in Wynnum. Developments in Manly focused on the provision of local facilities, such as shops running along the Cambridge Parade. Most local developments in Manly concentrated on its role as a seaside resort, and, for example, in 1926, experimental tidal baths were opened. In the post-Second World War period, some industries relocated to the Manly area, such as a vegetable cannery opening in Manly West. Construction of the boat harbour began in the 1960s, and in 1964, the Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron, established in 1885, moved to Manly. By 2011, the population of Manly stood at 3,702.

In 1879, with the passing of *The Divisional Boards Act*, Manly formed part of the Bulimba Divisions. Divisional Boards were established to provide local government for portions of Queensland that lay outside the boundaries of municipalities, such as Brisbane. However, in 1888, Manly became part of the Kianawah Division when the latter separated from the Bulimba Division. In 1892, Kianawah Division was renamed the Wynnum Division, which became the Shire of Wynnum in 1903. In 1912, the Shire of Wynnum became the Town of Wynnum. In 1925, Manly, as part of Wynnum, became part of the newly created Greater Brisbane City Council.

Alfred Gibson and 46 Manly Road

Born in 1873 in Victoria, Alfred Gibson attended Dookie Agriculture College before managing several farms. Gibson moved to Queensland in 1909. In 1911, Gibson joined Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture and Stock as a Farm Foreman at the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton – now part of the University of Queensland. In 1914, Gibson was promoted to Instructor in the Department of Agriculture and Stock's headquarters in Brisbane. After an alteration in job titles, Gibson became a Senior Instructor in the Department of Agriculture and Stock in 1928. In 1933, on the retirement of G.B. Brooks, Gibson became the Acting Director of Agriculture before being appointed to the position permanently later that year.

In 1919, Gibson purchased 32 perches of land – resubdivisions three and four of subdivision one of portion 88 – on the corner of Brisbane and Preston Roads, as Manly and Whites Roads were then known. In the same year, Gibson commissioned Eric Percival Trewern, who also worked for the Queensland Government, to design a

California Bungalow to be constructed on this site. *Le Sommet*, an early example of a California Bungalow in Brisbane, is the earliest identified house designed by Trewern and was conceived before he went into private practice in 1920. The earliest mention of a California Bungalow in Queensland appears to date to a 1916 advert in *The Telegraph*. This house, located in Chelmer, was described as the 'latest word in modern ideas for comfort and economical housework.' After putting the design out for tender, *Le Sommet* was built by H. Barraclough and completed in 1920. By 1921, Gibson is described as living on Brisbane Road in the *Post Office Directory*. By the time Gibson died in 1937, the house at 46 Manly Road was named *Le Sommet* – the summit.

California Bungalows, characterised by elements such as tapered pylons and prominent low-pitched roofs, were an important outgrowth of the English Arts and Crafts movement. In Australia, the Arts and Crafts movement, which emerged around the time of Federation and continued through to the years after the First World War, was 'an urban response to the challenges of modernity and industrialisation' that was influenced by developments in Great Britain and the United States while having its own logic. In Brisbane, the major proponent of the style was Robin Dods, who was widely recognised for his Arts and Crafts inspired designs. Indeed, Dods' 'early work was full of the romance of an arts and crafts philosophy which he never completely lost.' As well as the emergence of California Bungalows, in Australia, the Arts and Crafts movement led to a 'long-term love affair' with English domestic revival architecture and helped prepare the way for Modernism because of its 'stress on function and truth to materials.'

California Bungalows emerged in Australia during the 1910s, especially on the east coast. Seen as a 'natural development of the timber Arts-and-Crafts bungalows of the Federation period', California Bungalows were introduced at a time of increasing suburbanisation and population increase in Australia. In Queensland, the emergence of designs such as the California Bungalow came during a period that saw an increase in the diversification of residential architectural styles in Brisbane. This diversification occurred at time when architects explored new styles and moved away from the more traditional designs of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

Another factor in the emergence of the California Bungalow was the perceived similarity between the climate of California and that of Australia. As a result, California Bungalows were seen as being easily transplanted to the Australian context. The emergence of California Bungalows was also driven by the 'availability of American [architectural] journals' and their influence on 'domestic architecture in Australia' that happened in the early 20th Century. Indeed, between 1908 and 1912, the trade publication *Building* published articles that marketed the 'California bungalow as a desirable permanent home' in Australia. More broadly, the emergence of the California Bungalow is illustrative of the growing influence that American culture increasingly had on Australia during the 20th Century.

Le Sommet remains the purest version of the California Bungalow designed by Trewern as he stayed close 'to his sources' in designing the residence. Moreover, the house consisted of critical hallmarks of the style, including, for example, the use of river stone for the tapered pylons topped with slabs to 'carry the grouped posts which span the final gap between the piers and the veranda roof.' While a characteristic element of California Bungalows, Trewern was sparing in his use of this feature in future designs, though one exception was *Kooyong* on Oleander Drive in Ashgrove, which was constructed in 1927. Later California Bungalows designed by Trewern were much more evolutionary and saw him experiment with elements from other styles. For example, *Mon Abri*, the house he designed for his family in Greenslopes, incorporates elements of the California Bungalow and Old English style of dwellings. Moreover, by the mid-1920s, Trewern had begun to move away from the California Bungalow style to focus on Old English and Spanish Mission-inspired designs.

Le Sommet's significance has been highlighted by its inclusion in a 1988 exhibition entitled 'Well Made Plans' that was held at Brisbane City Hall. *Le Sommet* was one of six Trewern designs selected for inclusion in the exhibition, which was designed to highlight the work of the Queensland Architectural Archive at The Fryer Library at The University of Queensland. Similarly, *Le Sommet* appeared in Richard Apperly's volume *A Pictorial Guide*

to *Identifying Australian Architecture* section describing California Bungalows.

The life and work of Eric P. Trewern

Trewern, born in 1895 in Bendigo, Victoria, became one of the most noted architects working in Brisbane in the years between the First and Second World War. His private practice, established in 1920, has been described as 'the most successful residential firm of the interwar period.' Before training as an architect, Trewern studied art at the Bendigo School of Mines. He then trained as an articled pupil of John Beebe. Beebe, who moved to Queensland in 1916, was most notably responsible for designing the portals of the former Hornibrook Highway bridge.

Trewern also moved to Queensland in 1916 and initially worked for the draughtsman in the Department of Agriculture and then the Department of Public Works for the Queensland Government. In July 1916, after moving to Brisbane, Trewern was informed that he had passed the entrance examinations for the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects and later applied for membership of the Institute. In the same year, Trewern became a member of the Queensland Institute of Architects. After working for Queensland Government, in 1920, Trewern moved into private practice, where he developed his reputation as a highly regarded architect.

The height of Trewern's success as an architect occurred between the First and Second World Wars. He is renowned for his innovative designs incorporating the Spanish Mission and the Old English styles. However, as evidenced by *Le Sommet*, Trewern was equally at home working in other styles such as the California Bungalow. Amongst Trewern's finest residential designs is *Santa Barbara* in New Farm, which is considered the best example of the Spanish Mission style in Brisbane.

Contemporaries highly regarded Trewern's designs. Regularly appearing in newspapers and trade publications, his designs were often being described as 'modern.' In 1926, *Building* described Trewern's own home *Mon Abri* as being modern as 'space for circulation is eliminated as much as possible, and the living room common to all, is so much larger in consequence.' However, while Trewern's designs were highly regarded, they were not free from criticism. For example, the same 1926 piece that praised *Mon Abri* also noted several design flaws, such as the dressing room being 'rather remote' from the bedrooms and bathrooms. As well as designing new modern homes, Trewern also worked on modernising older houses to bring them up to date with the latest innovations.

Trewern's designs also received professional recognition in the form of awards. In 1925, for example, Trewern entered the Brick House Competition organised by Brick Distributors Ltd. and the Queensland Institute of Architects. The competition awarded prizes for the best affordable 'modern cottages in brick' in three monetary categories: £400, £600, and £1,050. Trewern came first in the £1,050 category and second to T.B.F. Gargett in the other two. Concerning Trewern's commercial designs, the Maxam Cheese Products Ltd. factory on Stanley Street in South Brisbane was awarded the Queensland Award for Meritorious Architecture by the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects.

Trewern was an active member of many learned architectural bodies and sought to help to improve professional architectural standards in Queensland. As a result, he became a Fellow of the Queensland Institute of Architects and the Royal Australian Institute for Architects in 1923 and 1930, respectively. Trewern was made a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1931. He also served as the President of the Queensland Institute of Architects between 1931 and 1935 and was Vice-President of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects between 1932 and 1933.

Notably, Trewern played an active role in the institution of the Queensland Board of Architects, which managed the provisions of the *Architects Act 1928*. As early as 1925, Trewern supported a motion by the Queensland Institute of Architects to again approach the Queensland Government to establish a means of formal registration for architects in Queensland. This agitation by the architectural profession contributed to the passing of the *Architects Act* of 1928. The *Architects Act* sought to 'provide for the registration and [regulation of] the practice of

architects' in Queensland and formed the basis of the modern architectural profession in State. On its formation in 1929, Trewern was one of the first two professional members elected to represent practising architects on the Board of Architects alongside H.W. Atkinson. Lange Powell was also a member of the Board as a representative of the Queensland Institute of Architects. After introducing registration, Trewern became one of the first 72 registered architects in Queensland.

Trewern continued to practice in the years after 1945 up to his death in 1959. After 1959, the practice continued to be operated by Trewern's younger brother Alexander, who became an articled pupil of Eric's in 1926.

Description

Located on the corner of Manly Road and Whites Road, Manly West, *Le Sommet* is an early, highly intact example of the California Bungalow architectural style. Positioned on a corner block that slopes away from Manly Road, the house is set back from both street frontages. Similar to other houses in its immediate context, *Le Sommet* is domestic in scale and appearance. *Le Sommet* is partially visible from Manly Road, when approaching from the east; however, mature vegetation partially obscures views from the intersection of Manly and Whites roads.

General description

Le Sommet is a single-storey timber-framed house designed in the California Bungalow style, a derivative of the Arts and Crafts movement. It is generally rectangular in plan, with a low-pitch, cross-gable roof. The Manly Road elevation is asymmetrical, with a street-facing double gable and L-shaped verandah that terminates at an offset gable on the Whites Road elevation. Entry to the place is via timber stairs on the Whites Road elevation, leading to an undercover porch and recessed front door.

Although non original metal-framed windows enclose the verandah, the majority of original architectural features remain. This includes the tapered river stone pylons with slab caps, grouped timber posts supporting the verandah roof, scalloped brackets, and weatherboard balustrading with dowel cut-outs.

The roof is corrugated sheet metal and includes deep eaves and timber-lined soffits. Verandah eaves are sheet lined. Street-facing gables have tapered bargeboards and shingle skirt infill. The main gable has a central gable ventilator on the Manly Road elevation, while the secondary gable has bracketed purlins. An original flat-top chimney is located to the rear of the main gable, just south of the apex. Exterior walls are clad in weatherboard from floor level to the eave line. Walls under the entry porch and verandah feature single-skin belted vertical-joint boards (VJs). Subfloor spaces have been enclosed by dark brickwork.

Many of the original windows and door openings remain in their original location. Beneath the Manly Road roof gable, modern casement windows have replaced the original leadlight casement windows, though the projecting timber frame and narrow, shingled window hood remain. The shingles extend to the underside of the gable infill. A bay window under the Whites Road roof gable includes supporting timber brackets and leadlight casement windows. A prominent feature of the bay window is the extrusion of its geometric, three-sided shape up to the underside of the gable infill, terminating in a shingled window hood.

The main entry door is located under the verandah and is deeply recessed into the wall. The simple timber-framed door includes mullioned side and top lights.

Non-original blockwork and sheet metal fences enclose the garden to the front and side of the house. Behind the fence, the house is set amongst informal planting and lawns. A non-original metal gate on Manly Road opens to a

concrete path that leads to the primary entrance. On the western elevation, a concrete driveway leads underneath a non-original carport, and down to a non-original shed located at the south-western corner of the site.

An extension to the rear of the house in 2020 includes extra living spaces, a timber deck, and an undercover area. The carport is not original and has replaced an earlier built carport located on the western elevation, and a secondary entrance (including timber stairs) has been added.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Views to the house from Manly Road and from Whites Road
- The original location, set back and orientation of the house
- Informal garden and lawn setting, including a concrete entrance path
- Single-storey, cross-gable form
- Asymmetrical composition of Manly Road elevation and Whites Road elevation
- Gable infill, including shingle skirts, central gable vent and timber bracketed purlins
- Tapered bargeboards
- Timber-lined soffits
- Brick, flat-top chimney
- Entry to verandah/entry porch of Whites Road elevation, including timber stairs and landing
- L-shaped verandah, including tapered river stone pylons with slab caps, grouped timber posts, scalloped brackets, and weatherboard balustrading with dowel cut-outs
- Weatherboard external wall cladding
- Single-skin belted VJ verandah walls
- Location, size, and arrangement of original door and window openings
- The original location of casement windows on Manly Road elevation and original projecting timber frame
- The original bay window on Whites Road elevation, including supporting timber brackets and leadlight casement windows
- Shingle skirt above windows
- Window hoods including shingle-cladding and narrow profile
- The original location of the timber-framed entry door, including side and top lights.

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Non-original blockwork and metal fences, including metal gates
- Enclosed subfloor spaces, including doors and windows
- Non-original window and door openings
- Non-original doors and windows
- Non-original additions to the rear of the property
- Non-original verandah infill, including weatherboard infill and metal-framed windows
- Non-original garden structures including carport and garden shed
- Non-original pool

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:

Historical

CRITERION A

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

Designed in 1919, *Le Sommet*, an excellent example of an early California Bungalow in Brisbane, is important in demonstrating changes in domestic architecture in Brisbane from Federation through to the 1930s. This period saw important changes in residential architectural styles in Brisbane as architects explored new styles and materials and moved away from the more traditional designs of the late-19th and early-20th Centuries.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

As an excellent example of an early California Bungalow, *Le Sommet* demonstrates the principal design elements, construction techniques and materials of this residential style that was popular between the First and Second World Wars. As expressed in the citation's description, *Le Sommet's* key architectural elements include distinctive tapered river stone pylons with slab caps, grouped timber posts supporting the verandah roof, scalloped brackets, and weatherboard balustrading.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

Le Sommet has aesthetic importance for its architectural qualities. In contrast to the more traditional late-19th and early-20th Century designed houses surrounding it, *Le Sommet*, set within an informal garden and lawn setting, is characterised by the arrangement of key elements associated with California Bungalows, including its asymmetrical composition, single-storey, cross-gabled roof form, and tapered pylons. As expressed in the citation's description, notable design details include distinctive tapered river stone pylons with slab caps, grouped timber posts supporting the verandah roof, scalloped brackets, weatherboard balustrading, and shingling.

As his earliest identified design, *Le Sommet* has a special association with noted Brisbane-based architect Eric P. Trewern. Commencing private practice in 1920, Trewern is recognised as operating one of Brisbane's most successful residential architectural firms between the First and Second World Wars. Initially known for his

California Bungalow style houses, Trewern became widely recognised for popularising Old English and Spanish Mission-style houses in Brisbane. Trewern made a significant contribution to the development of the architectural profession in Queensland, including serving as the President of the Queensland Institute of Architects (1931-1935).

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Note: This information 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 information 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.

prepared by — Brisbane City Council (page revised September 2025)



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