
Picking up our road tour of retro beauties

Description



The 'Hobbit' house in Walter Crescent. A quirky ensemble of traditional and contemporary design elements, including an attention grabbing oversized porthole window. Image: Clinton Krause.

Bluestone columnist and architect **CLINTON KRAUSE** previously worked in Daylesford before relocating his business to Warrnambool. Clinton explores the architectural styles that gives our region so much character. Visit his website [here](#).

You may remember [last month we started a tour](#) of some of Warrnambool's retro design beauties and this month we pick up where we left off with a visit to Walter Crescent in central Warrnambool.

This estate, as the name suggests, was established by the Walter family in the early 1930's and showcases a number of architect **Tag Walter's** earlier designs.

The prevailing residential style of this time was the English worker's cottage and houses generally incorporated the romantic stylistic design features of this era.

Steep pitched terracotta rooves, bay windows, decorative gable ends, red clinker brickwork and timber windows with beaded glass sash panels were all adopted with abandon, giving the streetscape a nostalgic prim and proper 'British' feel.

These houses were designed by Tag during his transitional period – and one house in particular provides an interesting hint of what lies ahead.

No. 24 Walter Crescent is the oddball in a street of well-mannered conservative dwellings. A hybrid mix of conventional stylistic details, juxtaposed with a hint of some new, cutting-edge ideas this house is an intriguing and important exception.



What better way to tour one of Warrnambool's most interesting streets – Walter Cr – than in a 1957 Zephyr which was right at home outside the so-called “Hobbit house”. Image: Clinton Krause.

The owner fondly describes her home as the “Hobbitt House” – a reference to the oversized porthole window in the front façade which would definitely appeal to Bilbo Baggins.

Built in 1949, this house begins to reveal some of the mid-century devices of the impending international style: large expanses of glazing span from floor to ceiling, the extension of base brickwork to form a planter box as a decorative feature for the entry, a glazed screen to the porch is obliquely angled in contrast with the more regular lines of the building elsewhere.

My travelling companion, local car enthusiast **Harry Droste**, selected a 1957 Zephyr for our tour and it looks right at home against the kerb outside #24.

We continue on our tour to 60 Jukes street, built just 10 years later than the Hobbit house, but light years from the prevailing architecture of the street we have just left.



The house at 60 Jukes St built and designed by young draftsman Don Hunt. A celebration of the emerging new language of the modern vernacular. Image: Clinton Krause.

Designed by **Don Hunt** a young draftsman employee of Tag Walter and **Bruce Auty**, the excitement and eagerness to embrace the emerging zeitgeist is immediately evident.

Walls of glass wrap around all three sides of rooms that orientate towards the ocean views. For its day this would have been unprecedented and only seen in commercial shopfronts.

Flat rooves with deep eaves and wide fascias appear to 'ground' the building – as if to prevent the glass shell from floating away and there are hints of crazy paving and innovative cabinetry to the

interior.

This house is currently proposed for inclusion in Warrnambool City Council's Heritage Register and is a worthy and unique example of mid-century architecture and culture.

For the final leg of our tour, we make a quick visit past some other homes that will be subject to further investigation in the future – it is clear that there are still many great retro houses out there waiting to be rediscovered!



A glorious two-storey 'bauhaus' influenced Tag Walter designed city

townhouse. Image: Clinton Krause.



Another example of a ‘crossover’ house – fusing the old and new design language of this transitional period in architecture. Image: Clinton Krause.

Postscript: We have since had contact with the family members of a house featured in last month’s column – 48 Botanic Road, Warrnambool. We plan to return and explore more of the story behind this wonderful mid-century home in the near future.

Next Month: Breathing new life into some mid century marvels.



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Date Created

2015/04/19

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