

**An Architecture
of the Depression**
Vertical timber buildings
in Launceston

Miranda Morris

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1989

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This study sets out to investigate a building type not common to Launceston. It has been largely overlooked not only because of the small numbers and often deliberately secluded locations, but also because the material, oiled timber board, is associated with economic hardship. The buildings came into their own in the 1930s when cheapness of material was a prime consideration, as was ease of construction. This type of house could be built cooperatively by groups of friends. They were also cheap and easily erectable for company houses in remote areas.

Launceston, like most of the Western world, was badly affected by the economic depression. The number of houses built dropped from 196 in 1928 to 64 in 1932. Of the latter all but 7 were of timber.



Illustration by Ilon Wikland from Astrid Lindgren's *Lotta's Bike* 1971

The roots of this building method can be traced to Scandinavian fishing villages where many 18th Century examples still remain. The first recorded vertical oil board building in Launceston was designed by Colin Philp for Mr & Mrs Atkins in Ramsay Street in 1932. Philp gives his prime motivation for the use of this material as economic. For H S East who designed a house for his daughter Mrs Hart in Pedder Street the following year, cost was also a major consideration. Both architects were strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement and vertical oilboarding was easily integrated into that ethos. It set the precedent in terms of style for other architects using that material. Once the credentials for vertical oilboarding were established through its use in architect designed buildings, it was adopted by builders for much simpler houses.

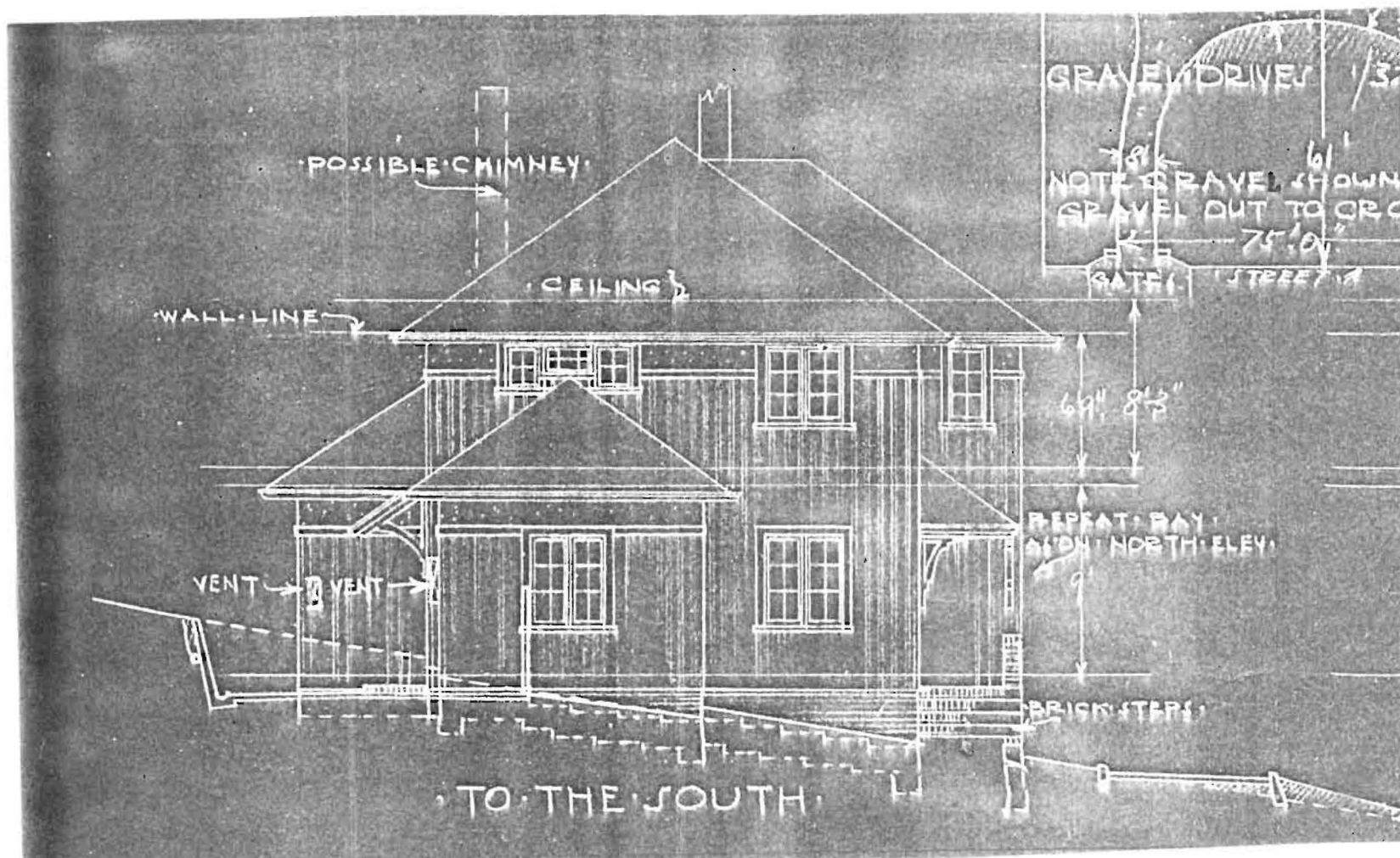
Vertical board buildings have since become associated with mountain retreats and seaside shacks. Many of those erected in Launceston were built in areas still surrounded by bush, others were erected within commutable distance along the Tamar, retreats from the real/depressing world.



Vertical oilboards are easily recognisable in their original landscape- reversing the common aesthetic of light background and dark trim, these dark brown structures with white trims stand out on hillsides. Unfortunately many have been painted white (the dark brown oiled boards having become an unpleasant reminder of economic hardship) and now blandly blend in with their neighbours.

It was intended that this survey incorporate buildings within the Launceston municipal boundaries, but the recent amalgamation with the Lilydale and St Leonards Councils, and the proximity of the Beaconsfield boundary, have made this an unusual area. Some houses in Trevallyn were outside the area but those at Burns Creek were within it. I also wanted to look at houses built as retreats. This has led me to include Paper Beach and some of Trevallyn although records of these houses are not accessible.

The arrangement of material is chronological by architect/builder (where known) for suburban Launceston, followed by Burn's Creek and Paper Beach.



Colin Philp (architect)

**12 Ramsay Street
Launceston Municipality**

Erected in 1932 this is the first recorded vertical oilboard building in Launceston. The architect has shown no hesitancy with the new material and has used the vertical boards in play with the shingles in a strong Arts & Crafts design. The tradition is carried through to the interior which is finished with complex panelling.



2

Colin Philp (architect)

**57 David Street
Launceston Municipality,**

Built in 1933, this is a smaller house, double fronted, with a receding gable. The six-paned windows, sometimes either side of a single pane, are one of Philp's hallmarks. The house is set back in a 'natural' English setting including a silver birch, a tree to be found in many gardens of this period.



Colin Philp (architect)

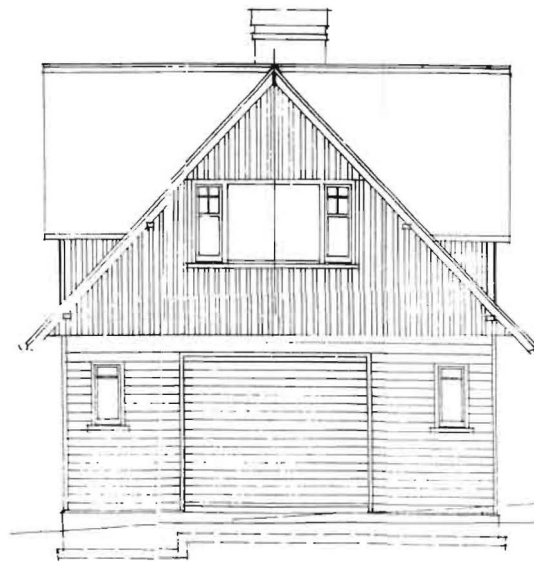
**4 Ramsay Street
Launceston Municipality**

Built in 1936 by Thomas Orr. Except for the roofpitch angled to accommodate a second storey and the main entrance being at the side, this house is in the tradition of the late Victorian bungalow. However, the use of dark vertical boarding places it clearly as a building of its time in the Launceston context.





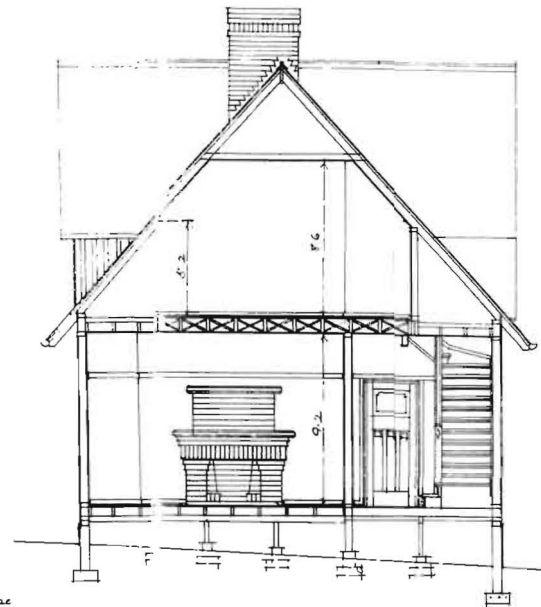
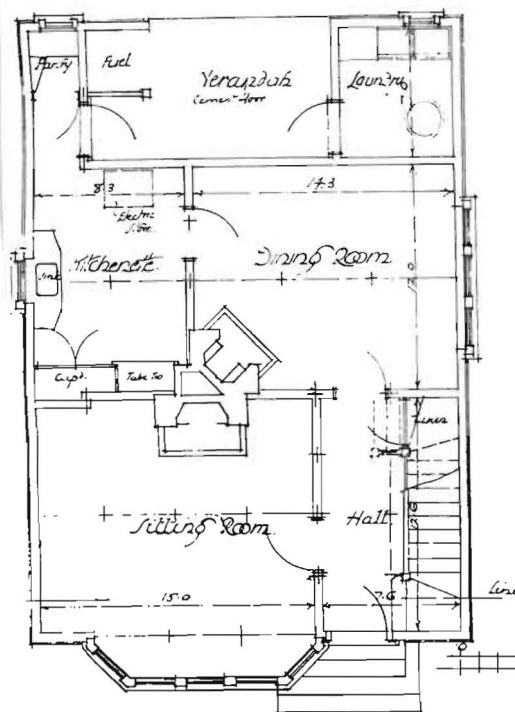
FRONT ELEVATION



BACK ELEVATION

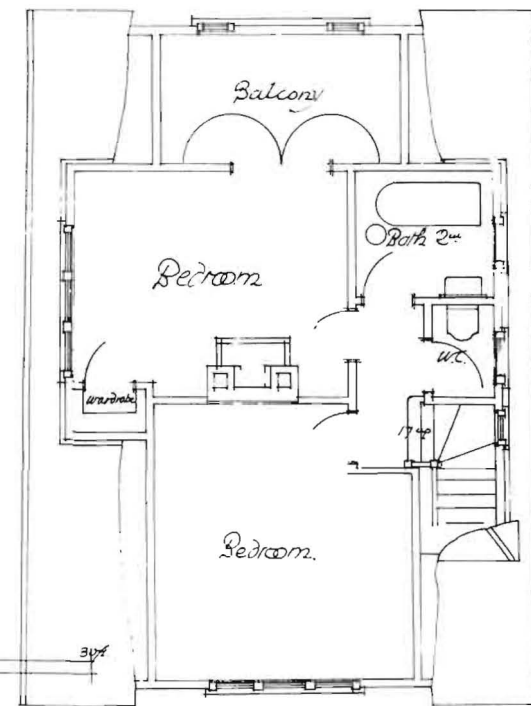


WESTERN ELEVATION



SECTION

General Scale



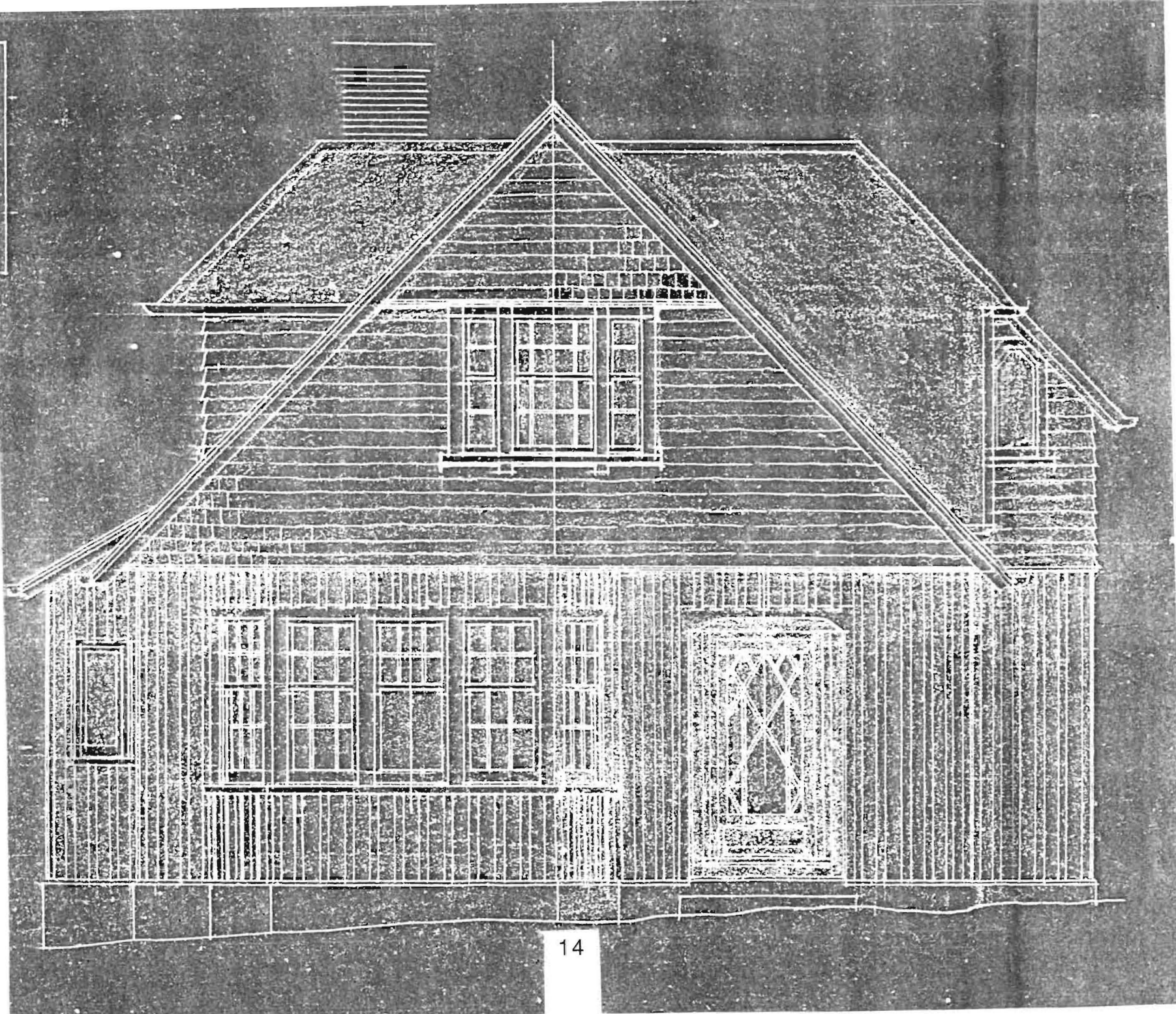
ATTIC PLAN

H S East (architect)

**6 Pedder Street
Launceston Municipality**

East's involvement and interest in the Garden City and Arts & Crafts movements in England are apparent in this house built for his daughter in 1933. It comes through in spite of the paring of extraneous details to accommodate a limited budget. It was the budget that informed the choice of vertical oilboards as a building material, but as with Philp the material is well-suited to the style.



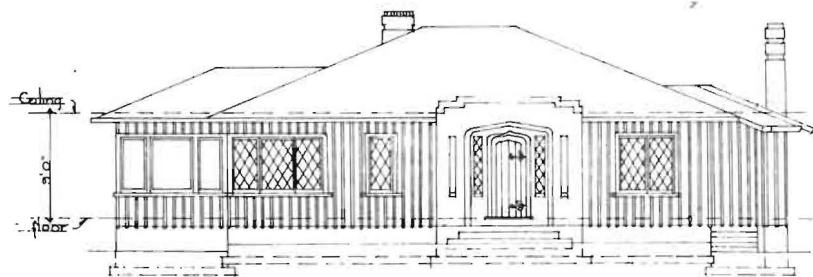


H S East (architect)

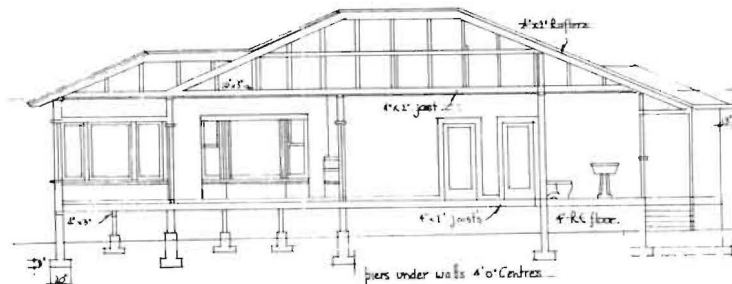
**21 Munford Street
Launceston Municipality**

Larger and more complex than Peddar Street this house combines vertical boards, weatherboards and shingles to create the diversity favoured for Arts & Crafts houses. It is located on a large internal block in an English landscape garden and was built in 1936 by Allan Bradmore.





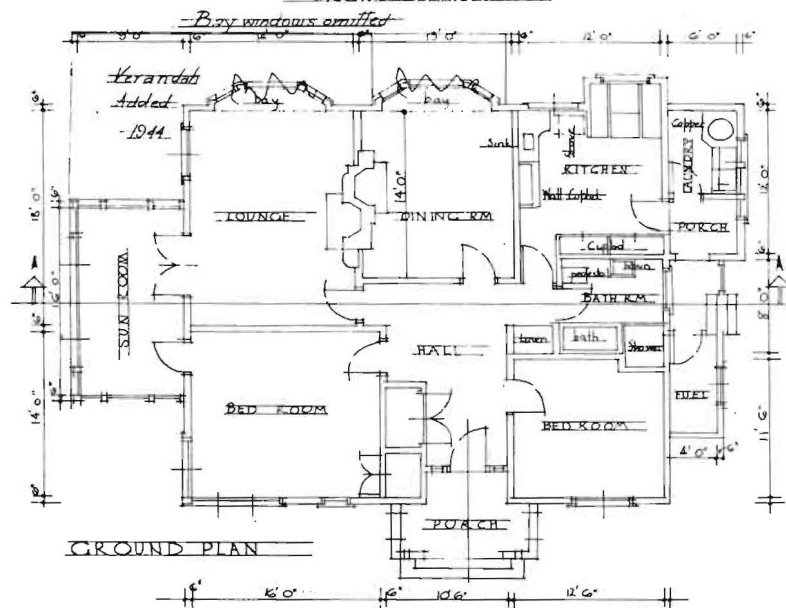
FRONT ELEVATION



SECTION A - A



EAST ELEVATION



GROUND PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION



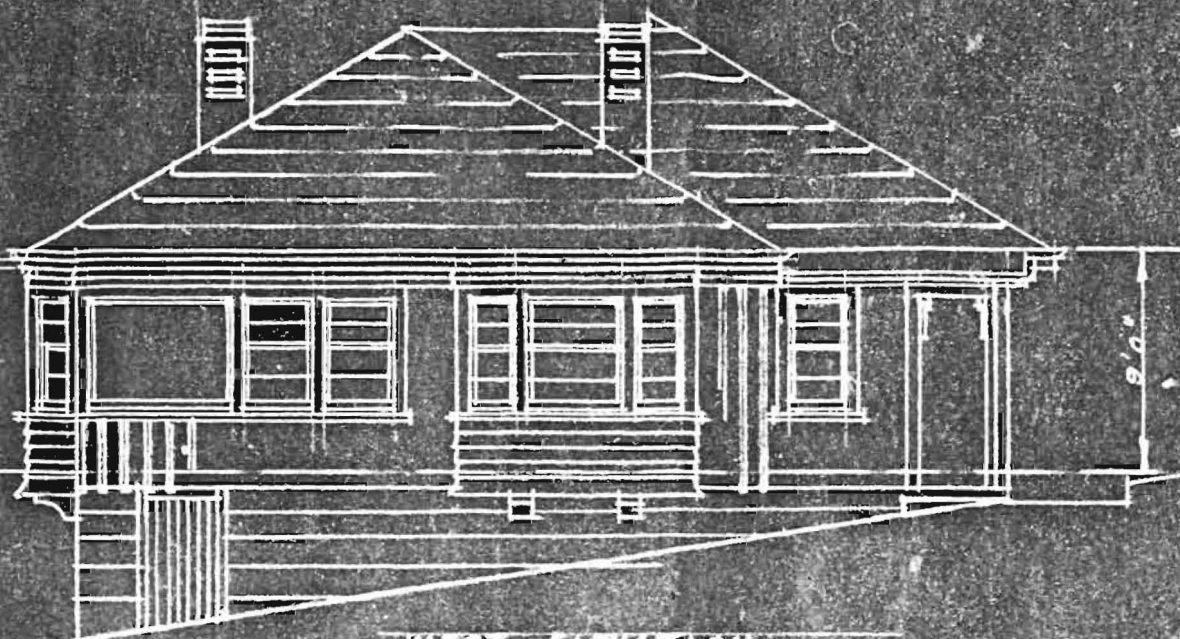
WEST ELEVATION

**East, Roy Smith &
Willing
(architects)**

**17 Newstead Crescent
Launceston Municipality**

This house, erected in 1938 by G C Gladman departs from the Arts & Crafts style evident in East's earlier work. It is possible that this is one of Smith's buildings. The design is eclectic, combining bungalow proportions, Art Deco portico, Baronial door, Neo Elizabethan diamond-paned windows and vertical oilboards.





WEST ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

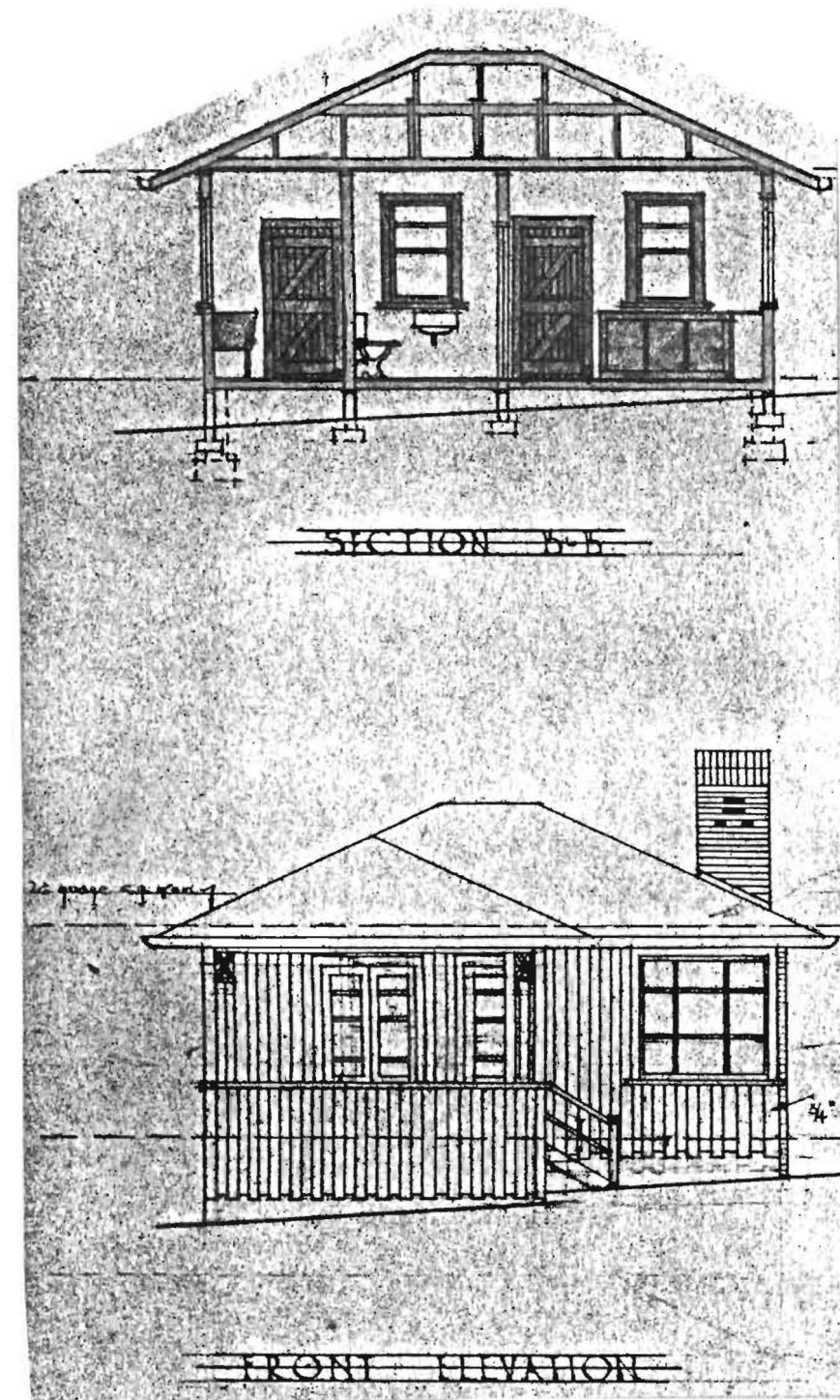
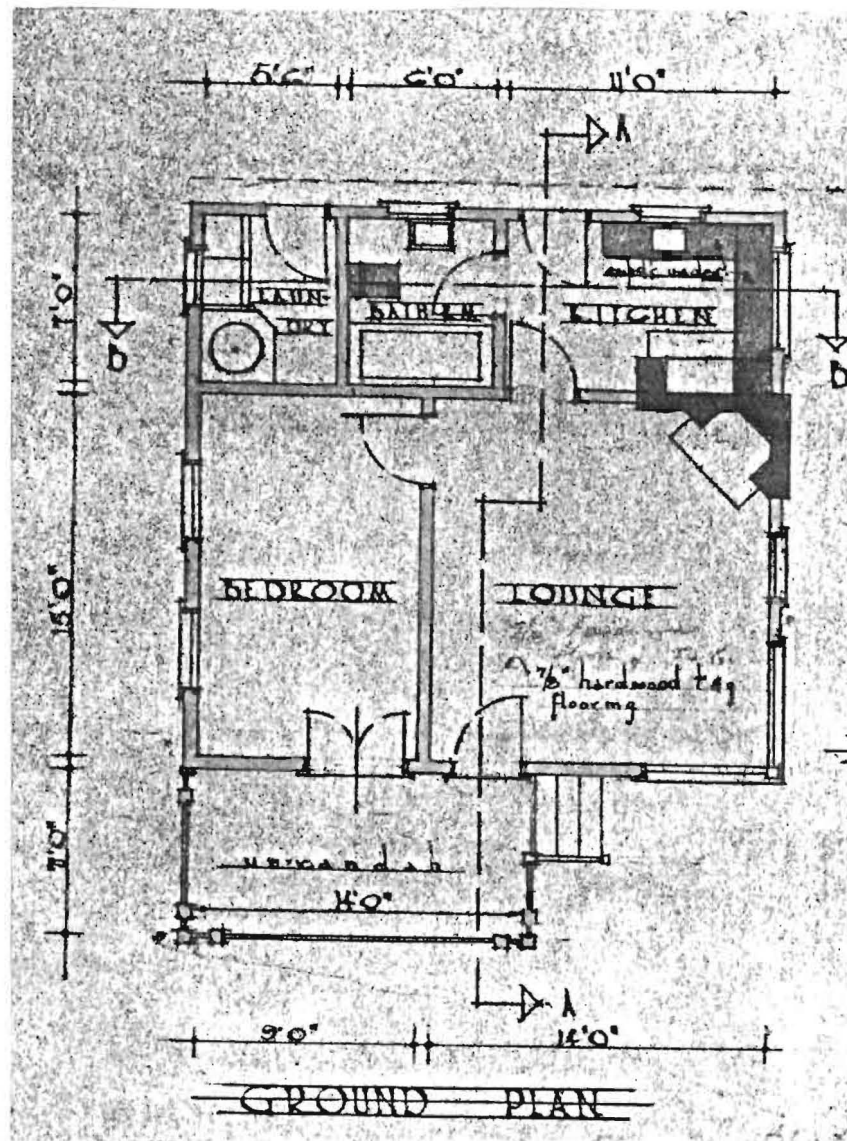
East & Smith (architects)

**10 Osborne Avenue
Launceston Municipality**

Again in 1938 Gladman erected an East & Smith house, this time for himself.

The style is a hybrid Bungalow with Art Deco windows.





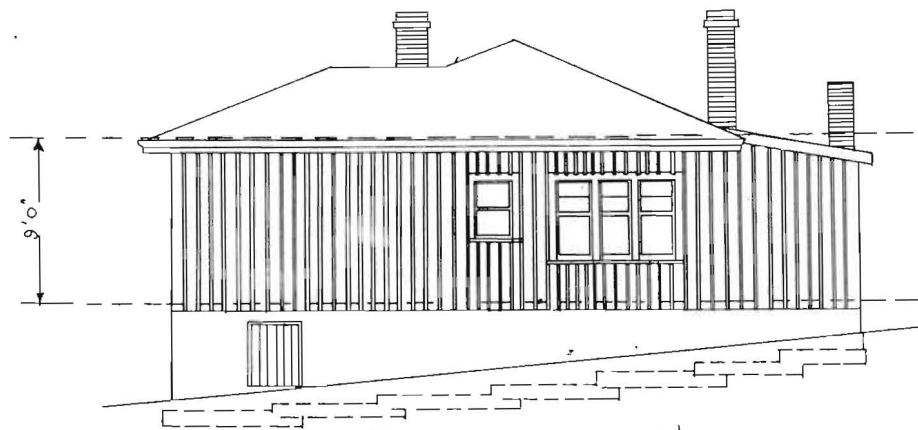
**East, Roy Smith &
Willing
(architects)**

**5 Anderson Road
formerly
47 Delamere Crescent
Launceston Municipality**

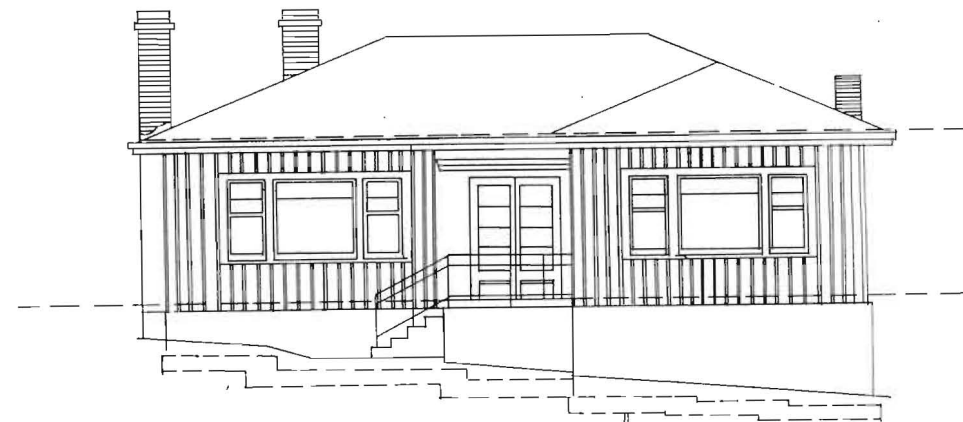
Although now situated in suburbia this 1938 house fits snugly into the retreat ethos, its small block of land retaining natural bush.

The design is simple, almost a shack architecture, but well-proportioned and suited to its material.





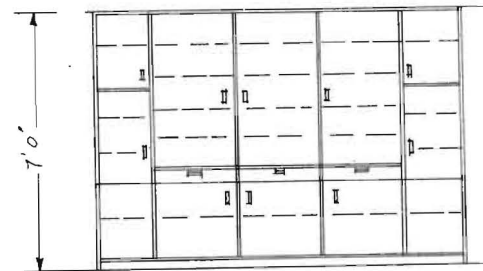
ELEVATION O WEST



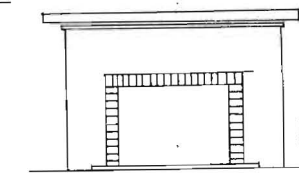
FRONT ELEVATION



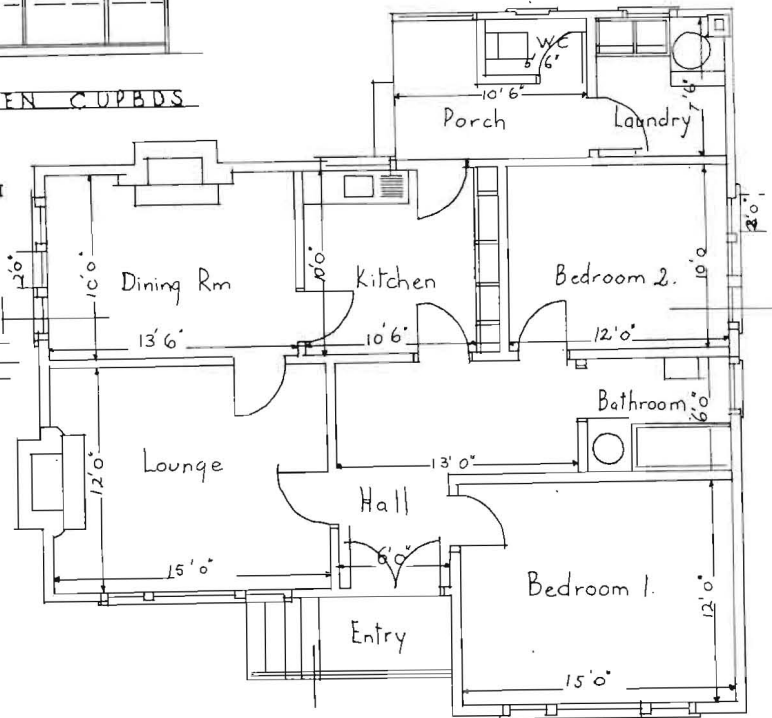
REAR ELEVATION



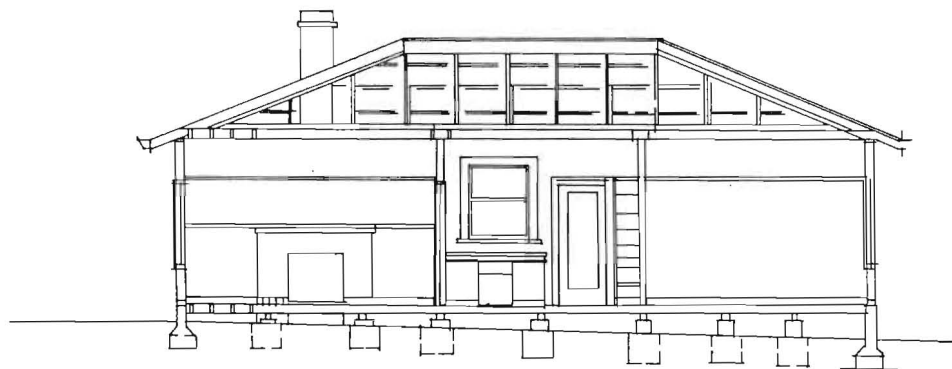
DETAIL KITCHEN CUPBDS



LOUNGE FIREPLACE
1/4' SCALE



PLAN



SECTION A-A

East, Roy Smith &
Willing
(architects)

17 Amy Road
Launceston Municipality

Erected in 1940 by CJ & A Bowen. Although of the same materials this house is far removed in intention from the one at 5 Anderson Road.

The massing is of traditional Bungalow style and its placement on the block unashamedly suburban.

The streamlined porch and double glass entrance doors are a concession to the period but in opposition to the material; a conflict between machine precision and natural environment.

23



Situation

Amy Road

No. of Rooms

Five rooms

Height

Nine feet

Intended use

Dwelling

Materials

concrete foundation, Lath & Plaster

Contract Amount

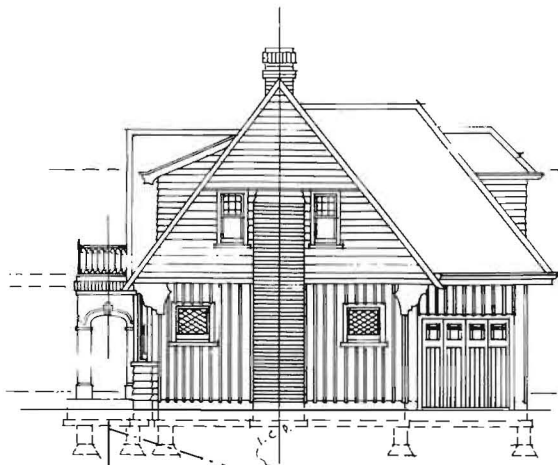
£ 625

C. J. & A. Bowen

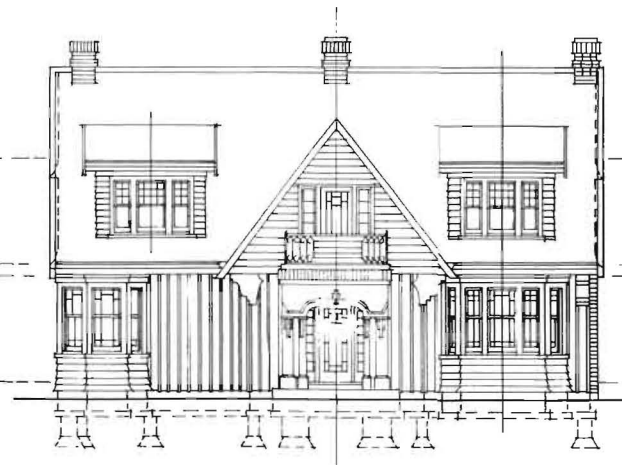
C. J. & A. Bowen.
BUILDERS.

OSID RESID

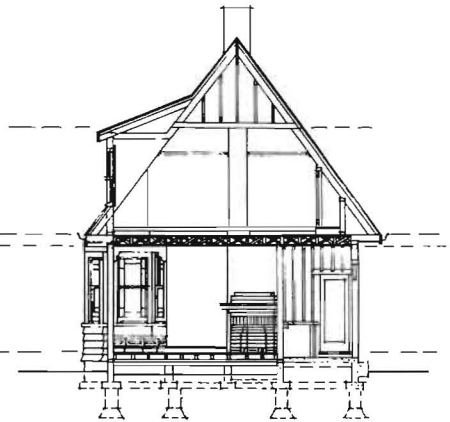
ROAD, LAUNCESTON. FOR MR. ROY. BEACROFT.



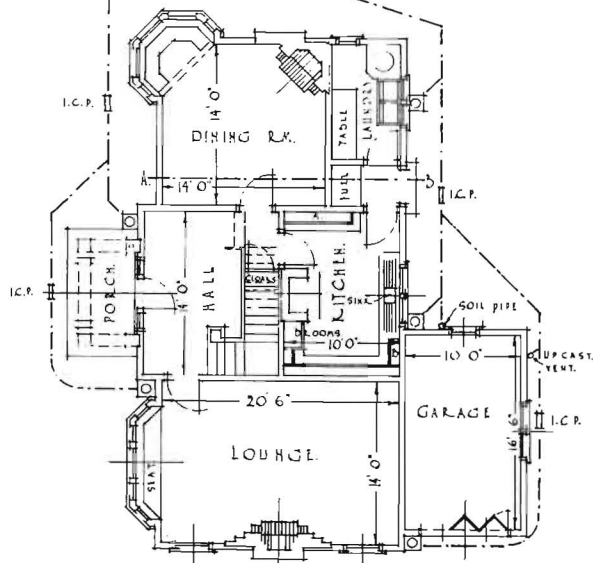
VIEW TO ROAD.



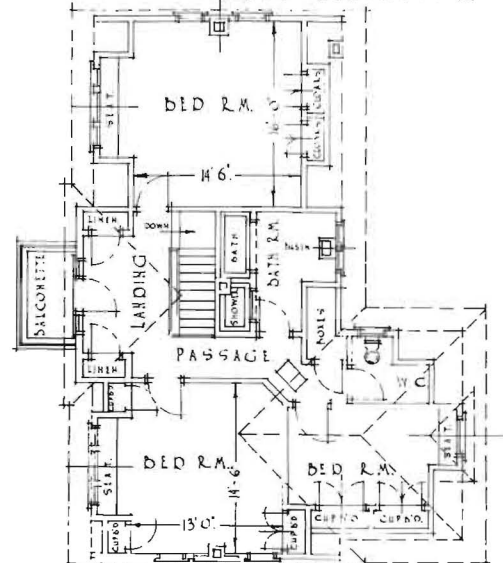
FRONT ELEVATION.



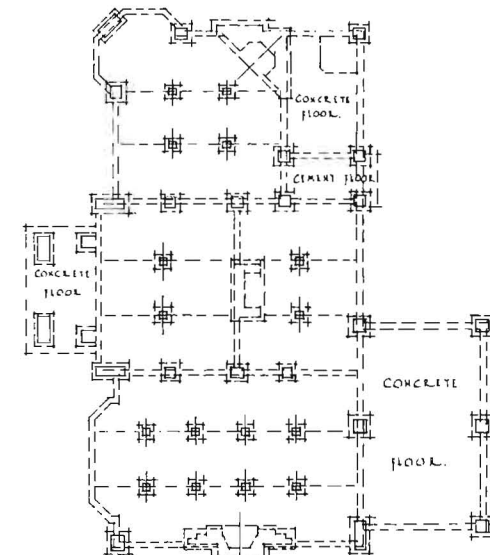
SECTION ON A-B.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN.



FOUNDATION PLAN.

THOS. V. TANDY.

13 CAMERON STREET, LAUNCESTON.

SCALE 8 FT. TO AN INCH.

Thomas V Tandy
(architect)

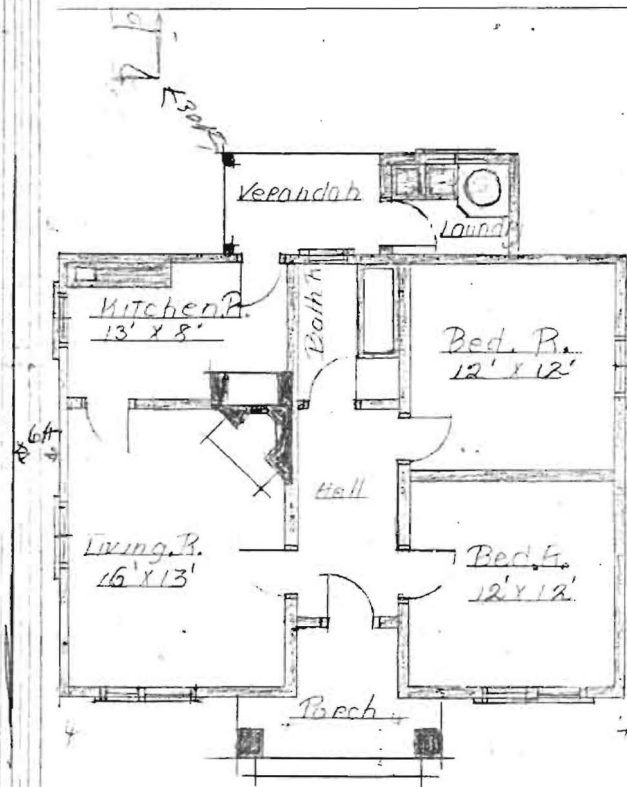
65 Normanstone Road
formerly Cleaveland Road
Launceston Municipality

This house of 1935 bears some similarity to the Arts & Crafts designs of Philp and East but in addition shows New England influences, especially the front entrance. This porch predates that of East, Roy Smith & Willing at 17 Newstead Crescent and is here far more appropriate to the overall design.

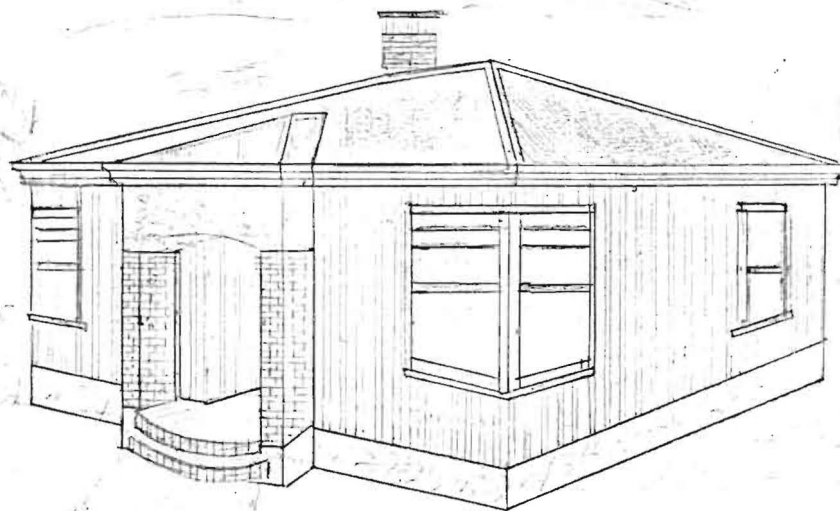
The builder was C K Byers.



Perlimery Design Scale $\frac{1}{8}" = 1'$



Ground Floor



Allan Bradmore (builder)

Hobart Road

Launceston Municipality

This house has not been located but the drawing shows a builder's adaption of vertical timber architecture. An internal Australian vernacular layout is brought into the 1930s with horizontally split window panes wrapping around each front corner. It was built in 1935.

P T Adam (architect)

**21 Tasma Street
Launceston Municipality**

Built in 1936 by J T Farmilo & Son, this house is closer in massing to the Anderson Road building, but not so well- proportioned. The windows, angled at the top corners show further Scandinavian influence.



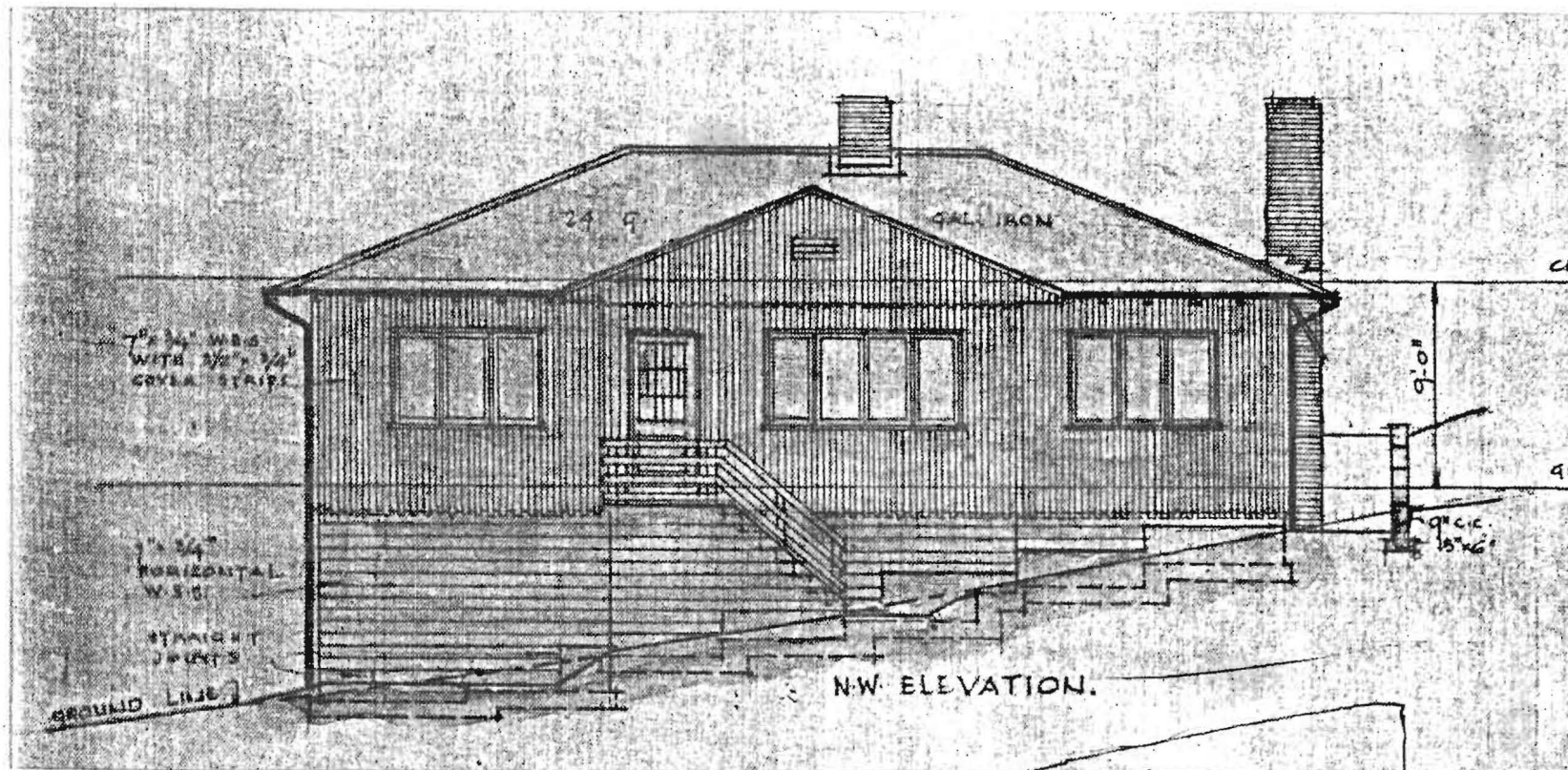
Purse & M'Grath (builders)

61 Haig Street

Launceston Municipality

Like 17 Amy Road, but predating it, this is a vertical oilboard building, suburban both in massing and environment. The stripped classical entrance denies the dark, rough material of the walls. It was built in 1937.





M V E Woodforde
(architect)

69 David Street
Launceston Municipality

Built by J Rowbottom in 1939, this house was built under the Housing Improvement Act of 1938. Although in a suburban setting the recessed entrance retains the idea of a retreat.

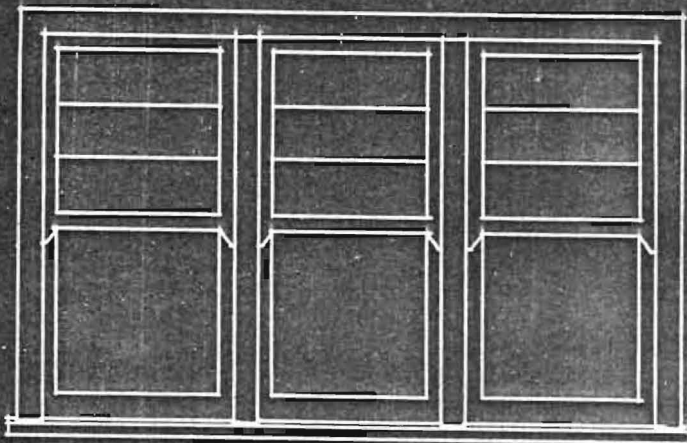


**THE HOUSING IMPROVEMENT
ACT, 1938, AND AMENDMENTS
THE HOMES ACT, 1935,
AND AMENDMENTS**

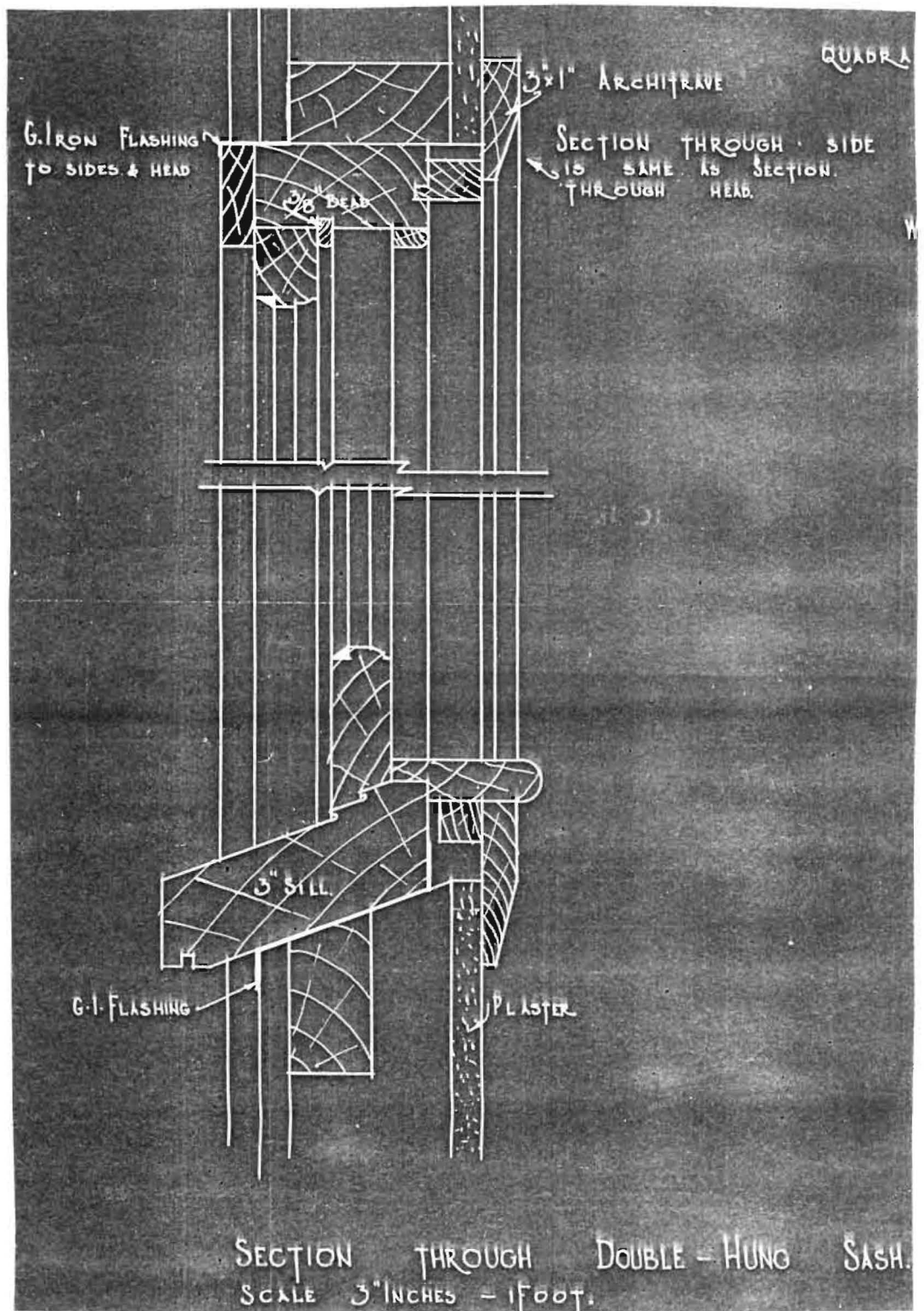
AGRICULTURAL BANK OF TASMANIA, HOBART

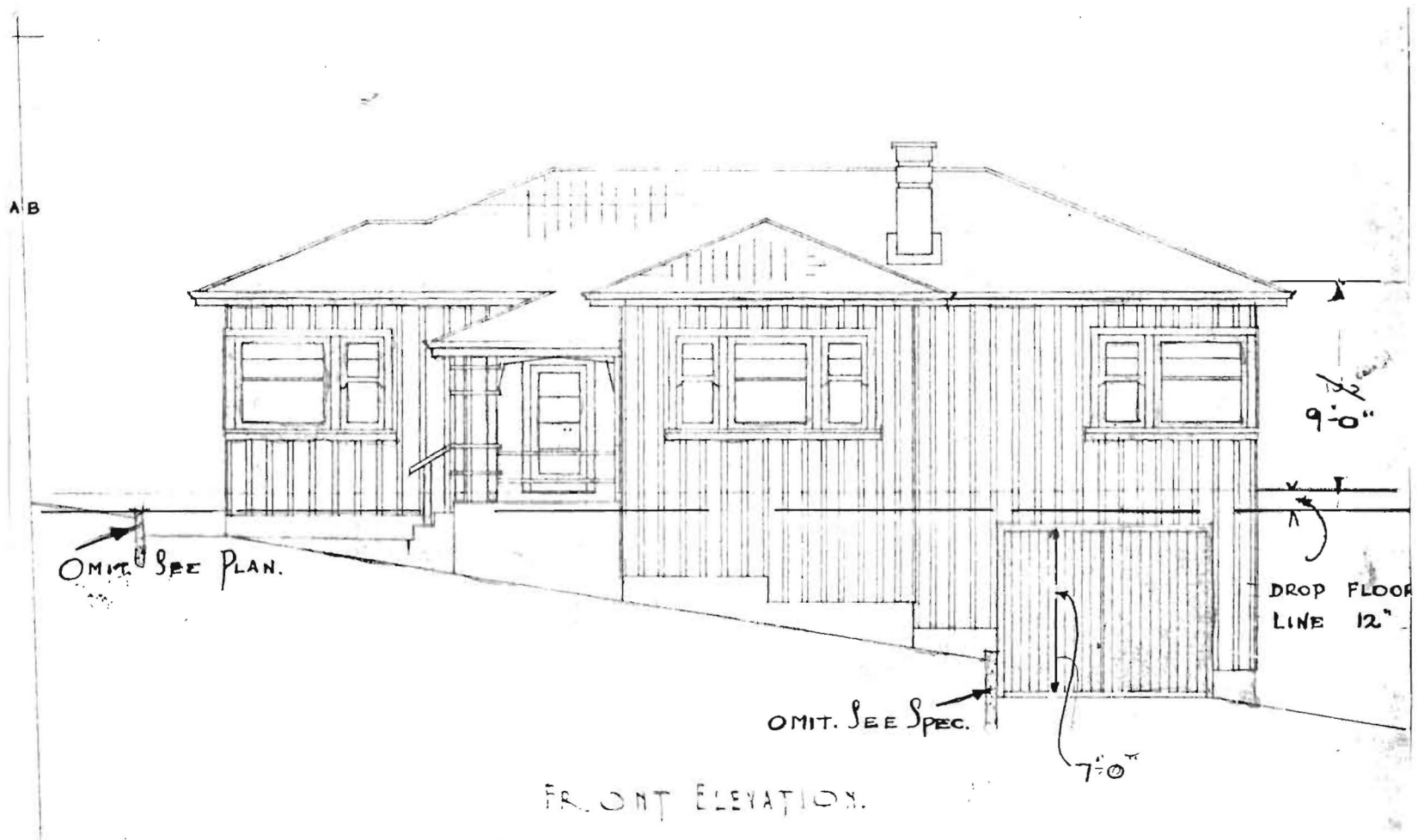
***SPECIFICATION
FOR HOME IN TIMBER***

751



DETAIL OF WINDOWS TO BEDROOM NO. 1.
AND DINING ROOM.
SASHES TO BE 4'-0" x 2'-0"



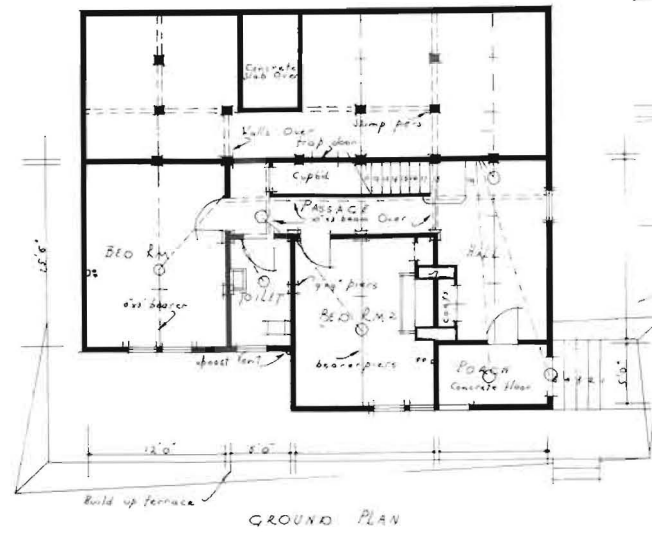


A H Masters (architect)

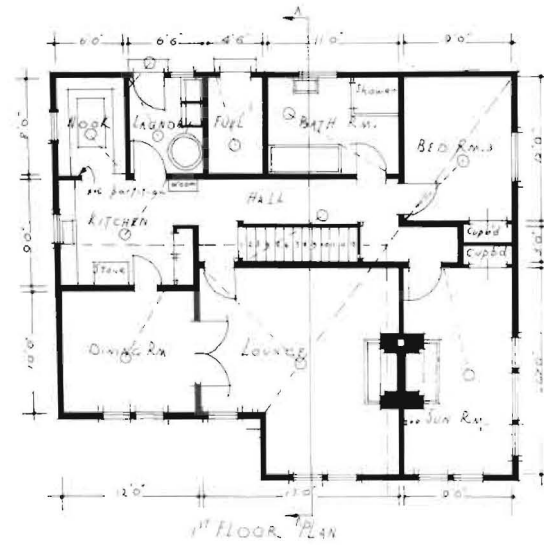
**84 David Street
Launceston Municipality**

**Built by Morgan & Cartledge
in 1939 this house has no
pretensions. It is a simple
suburban house built with
economy, but little style.**

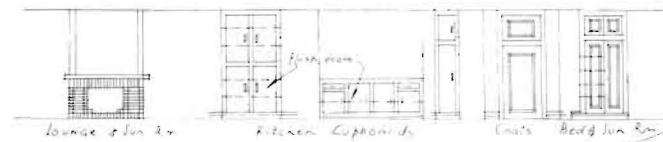




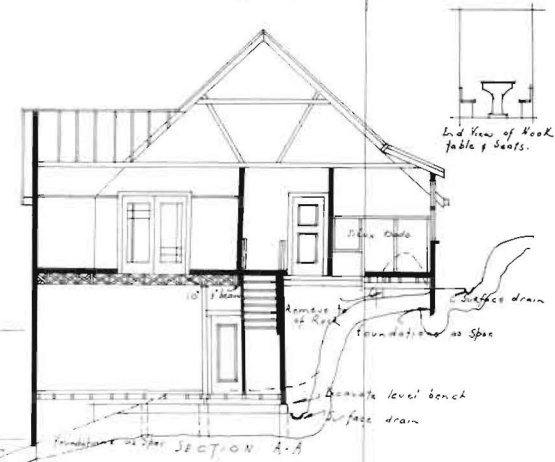
GROUND PLAN



1st FLOOR PLAN



FRONT ELEVATION.



SECTION A-A

A H Masters (architect)

**7 West Tamar Highway
Launceston Municipality**

Built in 1940 by N H Forsyth, this house in spite of its size and proximity to the road, maintains an aura of retreat. This is partially made possible by its steep backdrop, but is also the design of the house itself, the side entrance and the small proportions of the well-placed windows. The multipaning creating an inwardlooking atmosphere.

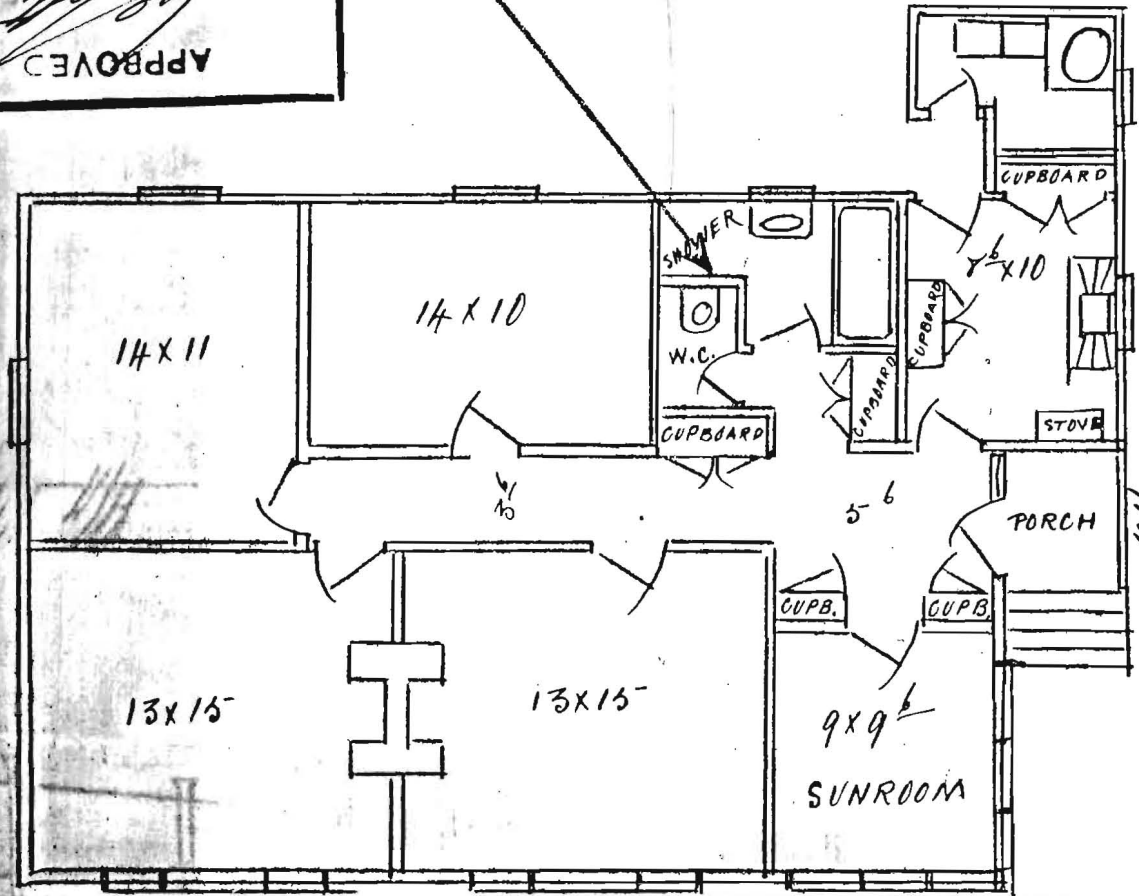
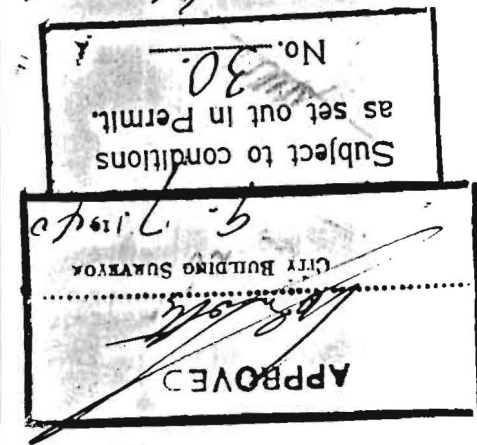


C Nicholls (builder)

**11 Ramsay St
Launceston Municipality**

Erected in 1936 by C Nicholls, this building again indicates Arts & Crafts and New England influences although this time understated; the pitches are less extreme, the porch less formal. Two-storey houses lend themselves well to a combination of materials, and dark vertical boarding is often accentuated by the use of another material like white stucco for one storey.





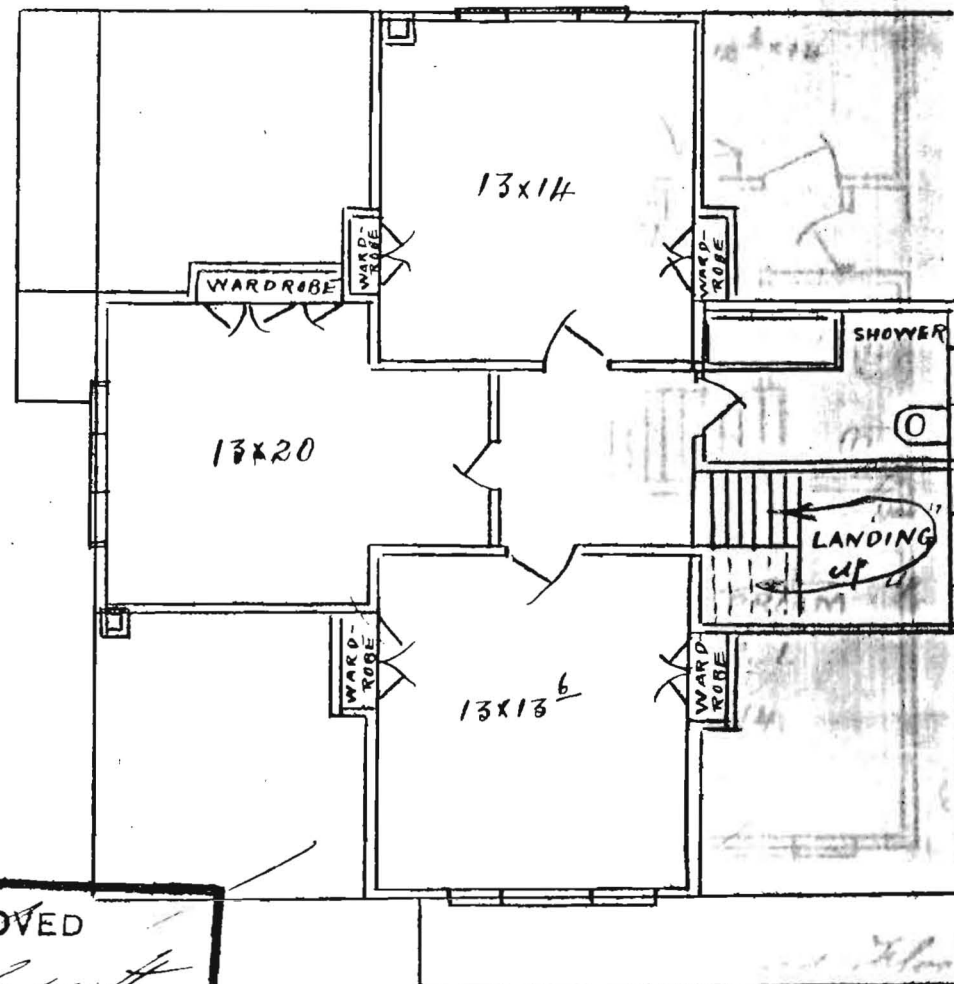
C Nicholls (builder)

**11 Junction Road
Launceston Municipality**

This building and the following one were both erected in July 1940 by Nicholls who appears also to have designed them.

This is a simple building in the shack/retreat tradition set in a relatively natural block.





APPROVED

[Signature]

CITY BUILDING SURVEYOR

27-7 11940

Subject to conditions
as set out in Permit.

No. _____

1st Floor

for Mr. Morgan.

Canning St

C Nicholls (builder)

**145 Canning Street
Launceston Municipality**

It is its second storey and porch that make this a dramatically different house from the preceding one. The top storey is accentuated by the change in colour and texture and the Cape Cod gables. Built in 1940.



H J Martin (builder)

**8 Bain Terrace
previously Trevallyn Terrace
Launceston Municipality**

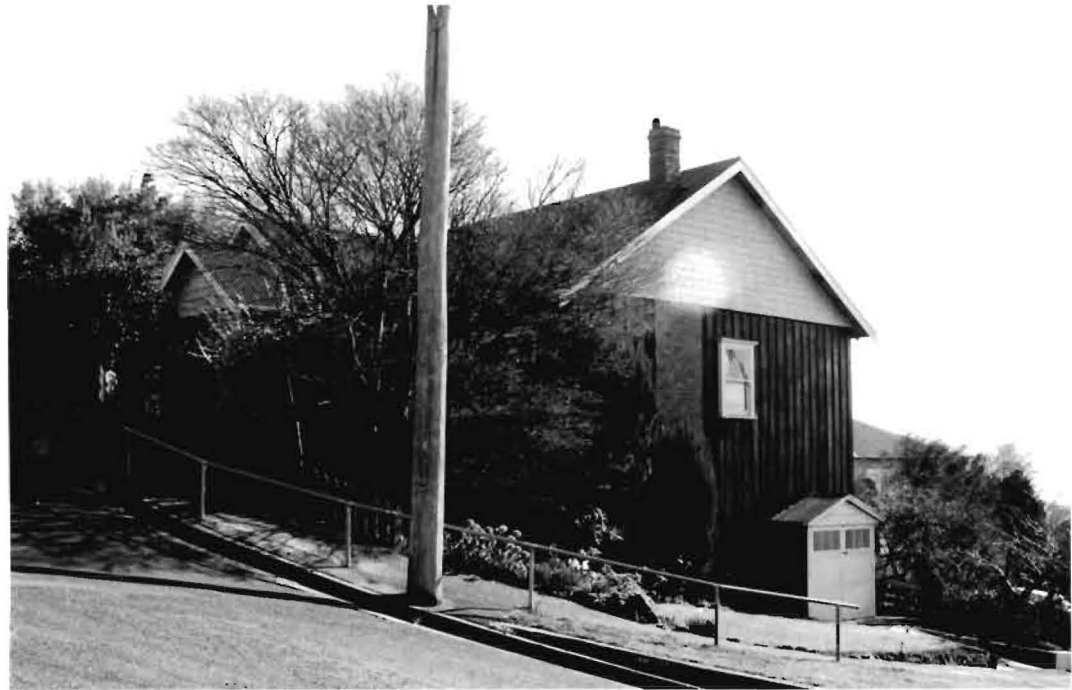
As a Post War building this vertical timber Arts & Crafts/ Cape Cod influenced house is an anachronism in 1947. It bears some resemblance to the C. Nicholls house at 145 Canning Street.



Anon

Gloucester Street
Launceston Municipality

No Council records have been located for this house. It appears to be architect designed. Diamond pane windows have been used as by East, Roy Smith and Willing in 1938 on 17 Newstead Crescent. The entrance porch is Arts & Crafts as is the setting in spite of the house's proximity to the road.



Anon

33 Punchbowl Road
Launceston Municipality

Although large this house has the appearance of being built on a low budget. While vertical timber was often selected because of its low cost, its cheapness has not often permeated the finished product. The problem with this house is its unresolved design. The wall facing the street has a large porch overhang inviting entrance but it is attached to an almost blank surface which visually pushes away.



Anon

13 Walker's Avenue
Launceston Municipality

A suburban vertical timber building, this house retains the simplicity of the retreat with its recessed entrance and the mature greenery of its setting.





Anon

2 & 3 Bowen Road, Trevallyn
Beaconsfield Municipality

These two very similar houses are outside the Launceston boundaries but are nevertheless part of the Trevallyn suburb. Viewed together they show clearly how the visual intent of a vertical timber design is changed when painted inappropriately as many have been.



Anon

**21 Bald Hill Road
Beaconsfield Municipality**

Although usually found in isolation in the suburbs this vertical timber house is adjacent to 2 Bowen Road, making an enclave of three.

This one borrows the steep roof/tall chimney of an Arts & Crafts house



Anon

28 Veulalee Avenue
Beaconsfield Municipality

This house set among mature trees, far back on its block in suburban Trevallyn, is, apart from its material, almost traditional Australian vernacular.



Anon

1 Henry Street, Norwood
Launceston Municipality

This small farm on the edge of suburbia is emphasised in its rural nature by the use of vertical timber in its original colour.





Anon

Burns Creek

Launceston Municipality

These are the remaining five cottages built for timber workers and their families at Burns Creek in 1937. They are excellent examples of the vernacular use of vertical timber. Cheapness as well as ease and speed of erection would have been primary concerns.









Anon

Paper Beach

Beaconsfield Municipality

Paper Beach became discreetly popular as a waterside retreat in the 1930s. Much of the bush still remains and many of the houses are set within it.

The prevalence of vertical board houses, none of which have been painted over, give the village a Scandinavian aura.







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