Interpreting the modern:
Flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941

living in multiple-occupancy dwellings in interwar Brisbane

in two volumes

1. Introduction, Chapters, Appendices 1-12 and Bibliography
   2. Appendix 13

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Submission date: 31 December 2010
This thesis investigates the fundamental social, cultural, demographic, economic and political changes that precipitated and encouraged the first significant wave of multiple-occupancy dwelling in Brisbane: the residential flats of the interwar period of the twentieth century.

Brisbane's earliest ‘flats’ had emerged by the 1910s, the product of converting large, obsolete nineteenth-century residences into multiple dwellings. Often not fully self-contained, they differed only marginally from the traditional rooming-house, and were widely considered as a short-term expedient in the face of a severe housing shortage.

In the 1920s Brisbane residents were introduced to the purpose-designed, modern urban flat. Acceptance was gradual, but by the second half of the 1930s, new flat construction in Brisbane was booming. The emergence of the purpose-built flat represented, physically and culturally, the city’s introduction to a distinctively twentieth century, modern lifestyle. The shift to flat-living created: vigorous community debate over the fear of slum creation; formal responses to these concerns in the form of local ordinances controlling the construction and licensing of flat buildings; and substantial change to the character of inner-suburban Brisbane.

Defining, accounting for, deriving meaning from, and exploring the significance of, the fashion for flat-dwelling in interwar Brisbane – in particular the popularity of the purpose-designed, purpose-built blocks of flats – are the objectives of this research. The fashion for living in flats in Brisbane is considered within three broad frameworks: the continuity of the urban experience across time and place; the democratisation of modernity and notions of what it meant to be ‘modern’ in Brisbane in the 1920s and 1930s; and the cultural legacy.

In pursuing these objectives the study considers contemporary debates about the nature of urban living and the need for town planning initiatives in Queensland; the inter-relationship between the compact flat and the lifestyle it generated; generic profiles of those who occupied and invested in purpose-built flat developments; interwar controls (overt and covert) on new flat construction; and the resultant environmental impact in terms of location, form, scale, materials and neighbourhood character. In conclusion, the cultural value of Brisbane’s interwar flats as a distinctive built form is addressed.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Aspects of the thesis have been utilised in the following published papers – neither is chapter-specific:


A substantial part of Chapter 10 has been published in the following paper:

‘New Farm from quality street to mixed assortment’ pp 151-75 in Rod Fisher (ed.), *Brisbane: Houses, Gardens, Suburbs and Congregations*, (Brisbane History Group Papers No.22), Kelvin Grove, Qld: Brisbane History Group, 2010.

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<td>Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland</td>
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<td>BCC</td>
<td>Brisbane City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHG</td>
<td>Brisbane History Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DERM</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland</td>
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<td>JOL</td>
<td>John Oxley Library</td>
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<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLC</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWSSB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>QGG</td>
<td>Queensland Government Gazette</td>
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<td>QGITB</td>
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<td>UQFL</td>
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PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
Acknowledgments

This thesis, which was commenced prior to the National Library of Australia’s project to digitise key Australian newspapers, necessitated much trawling of archival material and interwar journals and newspapers. I thank the staff of the following archives and libraries for their assistance with this: Brisbane City Council Archives (especially Annabel Lloyd); Queensland State Archives; John Oxley Library; the Queensland State Library’s Microform Section; Fryer Library at the University of Queensland; and Griffith University Library, Nathan Campus. Thank you also to Phillip Ward of Phillips Smith Conwell Architects for allowing me to access the firm’s plans archive.

I wish to thank Professor Pat Buckridge of the School of Humanities at Griffith University, Nathan Campus, for his gentle supervision and masterly reading of my drafts. His comments and advice have been invaluable and greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Dr Belinda McKay of the same school, for her encouragement in the early stages of this project.

Anyone who has attempted to research and write a doctoral thesis while in full-time employment will understand when I say that I have valued the support of my former work colleagues during that time, and in particular that of Fiona Gardiner, Acting Director of Heritage Branch in the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

To the many people who have shown interest in this project; to those who have invited me to speak at seminars or meetings; and to those who have kindly allowed me to visit their ‘tabloid homes’, I extend my sincerest thanks.

And to my family (especially my sister, Robyn Bennett, who produced the distribution maps used in Chapters 6 and 10 and assisted with the compilation of Appendix 13), I owe a debt of gratitude that no words can adequately express.
'Can’t you study something more important?'

Explaining why the interwar fashion for living in flats in Brisbane is worthy of academic study, can be a daunting task. Apart from curiosity value, what is the relevance of the exercise? If one accepts the notion that ‘every act of writing history refers to a political agenda, conscious or implied’\(^1\), why not study something ‘important’ and ‘topical’ like national identity and race relations, or women’s struggle for equality in the workplace? Why study the flat and its associated lifestyle?

My defence lies in an abiding passion for understanding and making sense of historical fabric – the remnant evidence of past events, actions and motivations – and in identifying how this may enrich the present. The bulk of Brisbane’s purpose-built, interwar blocks of flats survive and contribute significantly to the character of the city’s inner-urban streetscapes. They are part of our cultural heritage. If we fail to understand their past meaning and significance, we fail to understand and protect these places in the present, and their potential value to future generations may be lost.

My principal concerns are with the social, cultural, demographic, economic and political paradigms operating in interwar Brisbane that enabled, prompted and promoted the self-contained residential flat as an alternative to the detached suburban house. In the process of exploring these frameworks, this thesis will, I hope, contribute to our understanding of how Australians coped with the principal early-twentieth-century issues of population expansion, housing shortages, economic booms and busts, new technologies, increased exposure to overseas (especially American) influences (in everything from morality to consumerism, fashion, and technology), and the consequent shifts in parochial social and cultural values.

While the suburban ideal dominated in interwar Brisbane, purpose-built flats and the modern lifestyle they fostered had an impact on society and on the urban environment much greater than their numbers would suggest. Purpose-built interwar flats were considered ‘state-of-the-art’, and their occupants ‘moderns’. Not only are these flats and the flat lifestyle worthy of study, they are significant indicators of the nature of early-twentieth-century modernity as experienced in urban Australia.

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Introduction
Overview

Prior to the 1920s, Brisbane residents had no local experience of living in purpose-built blocks of flats. For anyone who did not own, rent, or rent-purchase¹ a detached or semi-detached house, the range of available residential accommodation was largely limited to the boarding house, lodging house, private hotel, furnished rooms in other people’s houses, or a tenement or flat in a converted house – the latter rarely as comfortable or convenient as purpose-designed flats. Public acceptance or otherwise of purpose-built blocks of self-contained flats had yet to be tested in Brisbane.

In Brisbane, as in all Australian metropolitan areas, the dominant and preferred mode of residential accommodation in the period between the first and second world wars was the detached, owner-occupied house. This was an era of rapid metropolitan suburban sprawl, fostered in Queensland by generous government assistance to average-income earners to rent-purchase a detached house and garden. For many battlers, the Australian dream of house and land ownership was turning into reality. At last, young workers could abandon the extended family home or turn their backs on the lodging house, boarding house, guest house and residential hotel. Families caught in the rent grind suddenly were given the prospect of owning their own home and securing a family asset which would become their children’s inheritance.

Yet from the 1910s a trend in Brisbane for living in flats in converted houses began to challenge the popularity of other forms of multiple-occupancy residential accommodation. Furthermore, from 1920 purpose-built blocks of flats vied with new detached houses as symbols of progress and modernity. While never a challenge to the numerical superiority of detached housing – flats and tenements comprised only 2.57 per cent of all occupied private dwellings in metropolitan Brisbane in 1921, 5.57 per cent in 1933 and 11.62 per cent by 1947² – their impact on the physical environment and on the social and cultural milieu of Brisbane was substantially greater than the statistics would suggest.

¹ The expression ‘rent-purchase’ referred to a financial arrangement for purchasing a house in small instalments, similar to a weekly rent; when the full purchase price had been met, the rent-purchaser obtained title to the property. Both State government and private sector rent-purchase schemes were extremely popular in the interwar period.
By the early 1940s flats and the lifestyle they engendered had become an accepted form of residential accommodation in Brisbane. Substantial blocks of purpose-built brick or concrete residential flats, popular with both investors and occupants, littered Brisbane’s inner suburbs – especially New Farm, Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, Spring Hill, South Brisbane, West End, Highgate Hill and Kangaroo Point – and had encroached on the older established suburbs beyond the immediate inner-suburban core, such as Hamilton, Clayfield and Ascot. There were also numerous smaller blocks of flats, often less substantially constructed. Maisonettes (pairs of semi-detached houses) which, as multiple-occupancy dwellings, were indistinguishable from flats under Brisbane City Council ordinances, had proven popular investments and could be found in most Brisbane suburbs by late 1941. In addition, the number of older houses converted into flats or tenements had increased substantially, far out-numbering the purpose-built blocks.

Accounting for, and extrapolating meaning from, this shift in the nature of residential accommodation in interwar Brisbane is the purpose and function of this study. The main argument of the thesis is that Brisbane’s purpose-built interwar flats were associated with the cultural concept of ‘being modern’ and all that this encompassed: changing lifestyles and work practices associated with the impact of new technologies; and accompanying new mindsets, expressed aesthetically in the replacing of Victorian ornamentation with streamlined functionalism in everything from art and architecture to fashion and furnishings. I argue that living in purpose-designed flats in the period between the first and second world wars was a new experience for Brisbane residents, an expression of what it meant to live in a modern city, and that the flat was considered as much a part of the modern world as the automobile and moving pictures.

Brisbane, however, was not prepared to embrace cosmopolitan flat-living in inner-city, high-rise apartment blocks such as those found in New York, Paris, or even Sydney. Though imbued with imported visions of a modern, non-suburban lifestyle, Brisbane’s purpose-designed interwar flats were suburban in location and scale. As in much market-driven consumerism, reality often fell short of the ideal, but image was everything. The purpose-built block of flats represented the height of progressive modernity in interwar Brisbane, even when found in a suburban setting.
Despite the overwhelming social, economic, political and cultural emphasis on the provision of owner-occupied detached housing in Queensland during the first four decades of the twentieth century, a variety of factors contributed to the popularity of flats as both a form of investment and a mode of living in the interwar period. They can be enumerated as follows:

- a sustained, rapidly rising metropolitan population;
- a sustained, chronic (bordering on acute) housing shortage, especially rental houses;
- the impact of the Fair Rents Act of 1920 in compounding the rental housing shortage;
- the influence of popular new planning models for shaping the urban environment;
- high rates and rising land prices in inner residential suburbs;
- the example of overseas and interstate flat models;
- the role of architects in promoting the responsibly-designed new block of flats as a lucrative investment;
- changing roles of women in marriage and their entrée into the industrial, commercial and professional work spheres;
- the concomitant ‘servant problem’;
- the increasing availability and affordability of labour-saving domestic appliances; and
- cultural changes that positioned modernity as the epitome of sophisticated cosmopolitanism and as a desirable community goal.

This study is contextualised by the principal social, cultural, demographic, economic, political and architectural urban discourses, events and trends of the era. Of particular relevance is the contemporary debate about how Brisbane’s local government should respond to the pressures placed on residential accommodation by rapid and sustained urban population increase. Issues such as urban planning and the Greater Brisbane

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3 I use the term ‘discourse’ more in the sense of its dictionary meaning than in philosopher Michel Foucault’s late-twentieth-century interpretation of the word. Refer to Macquarie Dictionary, 3rd edition, Macquarie Library, 1997: ‘discourse noun 1. communication of thought by words; talk; conversation. 2. a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing, as a dissertation, treatise, sermon, etc. – verb (i) 3. to communicate thoughts orally; talk; converse. 4. to treat of a subject formally in speech or writing. – verb (t) 5. to utter or give forth.’
movement; suburban expansion versus city centre congestion; fear of slum creation; and the control of flats were debated widely in the press, and had a pronounced impact on the form and function of interwar flat developments. New State legislation aimed at preventing the exploitation of tenants by the owners of rental houses, incidentally encouraged the construction of purpose-built flats. Events and phases such as the Great War of 1914-1918; the construction boom of the 1920s; the wide-spread economic depression of the early 1930s; and the commencement of hostilities in the Pacific region in late 1941 all had their impact on flat developments. Above all, the cultural desirability of ‘being modern’ and keeping abreast of overseas trends, along with the changing role of the ‘modern woman’ in the family, society, and workplace, were instrumental in creating conditions for the social and cultural acceptance of flat-living.

The extent to which women participated in the paid workforce during the interwar period had repercussions for their status in society and in the economy and – some would argue – tangentially produced the figure of the ‘modern housewife’ to counter the ‘new woman’ of the 1920s and 1930s. Assessing how these idealised views of women were linked to discourses about modernity and urbanisation/suburbanisation, and how this in turn was related to the increasing popularity of flat-living in Brisbane at this time, is an important focus in this thesis. The impact of new technologies on women’s work (both paid and unpaid) in the interwar period also produced ramifications for flat dwelling.

I refer loosely to the era under scrutiny as the ‘interwar period’, which strictly refers to the years 1919-1939. The study period for this thesis, however, extends from circa 1920 and the construction of the first identified purpose-built blocks of flats in Brisbane, to 1941 when wartime national security regulations effectively curtailed the larger-scale flat developments. Population and housing trends in the decade prior to 1920 have been examined as a prerequisite to understanding the shift to living in purpose-built flats from the 1920s.

Thesis structure

The chapters

The body of the work is presented in eleven chapters. Chapter one ("The flat tradition"), provides the historical context to multiple-occupancy dwellings in Western cultures. Studying almost any aspect of Australian history inevitably necessitates an exploration of the inherent dichotomies in a transplanted society, where an ‘old-world’ order exists in some tension with a ‘new-world’ vision. Multiple-dwelling buildings represent a fundamental and early urban form, accelerated in Europe with the onset of the industrial revolution. In Britain, the hastily erected back-to-back houses of England and the working-class tenements of Scotland – poorly designed, badly constructed, ill-serviced and densely populated – became a national scandal. The spectre of these overcrowded and insanitary buildings haunted colonial Australia, where a determination to raise workers’ living conditions dominated the political, social and cultural spheres.

Chapter two ("Housing shortage"), places the fashion for living in flats in interwar Brisbane within the context of the chronic, bordering on acute, housing shortage of the period. Rather than positing a simple cause and effect mechanism, this chapter examines the housing shortage as a pre-condition for the acceptance of multiple-occupancy dwellings in interwar Brisbane. Economic fluctuations, demographic patterns and political interventions affecting the availability of housing in Brisbane during the first four decades of the twentieth century are examined. These determined the type of residential accommodation available, and explain why the first purpose-designed flats in Brisbane were not erected until the 1920s.

In chapter three ("The ‘flat problem’") the popularity of converting houses into flats and tenements in the inner suburbs, and the repercussions for public health, social cohesion and neighbourhood character, are examined. The house conversions offered the inhabitants of Brisbane their first experience of local flat-living. The practice intensified in the 1910s in response to a growing housing shortage, and remained remarkably popular throughout the study period and beyond. However, a broad section of the community considered the house conversions to be regressive and anti-modern. Widespread concern that these conversions would lead to deteriorating living conditions initially retarded the acceptance of more modern, progressive, purpose-designed flat buildings.
Chapter four (‘Controlling the ‘flat problem’’), is positioned within contemporary discourse and debate regarding the future of Greater Brisbane. With the town planning movement gaining momentum in Queensland at this period, community concern that uncontrolled flat development would lead to slum creation became entwined with debates on town planning issues. This chapter focuses largely on how local government (a single authority from 1925) reacted to, planned for, or failed to plan for, flat development within the Brisbane metropolitan area. Council’s actions should be viewed within the dichotomy created by deeply entrenched socio-cultural prejudices against multiple-occupancy dwelling on the one hand, and a push for modern flat developments satisfying interwar aspirations for a better quality of life, on the other.

In chapter five (‘Modern house or modern flat?’), the fashion for living in flats is examined within the context of the extensive and rapid suburban expansion of the interwar years, and the overwhelming ideological, cultural, social, economic and political emphasis on individual home ownership. This emphasis permeated all levels of the home building industry and investment sectors and was expressed both symbolically and practically through the Queensland government’s Workers’ Dwellings and Workers’ Homes schemes, designed to make home ownership accessible to the majority of Queenslanders. The emphasis on home ownership was so powerful and so deliberate that it is surprising that interwar flat developments succeeded at all. It is argued that a symbiosis evolved between the redundancy of older, inner-suburban dwellings, the subdivision of their surrounding estates, the popularity of flat buildings, and the creation of the outer-suburban residential sprawl.

The growth and distribution pattern of Brisbane’s interwar flats are surveyed in chapter six (‘Growth, distribution and the creation of ‘flat colonies’’), establishing the physical parameters to the study. Census and other available statistical data from the interwar period are relied upon to identify the principal pattern of distribution, corroborated by contemporary observations. The manner of Brisbane’s spatial growth – concentric circles of expansion, ribbon growth along the railways, and the close link between topography and socio-economic status – provided the physical background upon which interwar flats were superimposed. Therefore this chapter also examines the economic, topographic and other determinants to flat locations.
Chapter seven (‘Designing, finishing and furnishing flats’) examines the role of international trends, interstate experience and local architects in influencing and encouraging the planning and designing of healthy flat developments according to contemporary notions of modernity and progress. The influence of several key provisions of the local government ordinances controlling the construction and licensing of multiple-occupancy dwellings is examined in terms of their impact on design and site planning. Broad taxonomies of flat types and styles are identified and illustrated, and the influence of the compact interwar flat in generating new approaches to the design and function of furniture for small dwellings is investigated.

Chapter eight (‘Tabloid living’) examines the myth and the reality of living in flats in interwar Brisbane – particularly in the modern, purpose-designed blocks. It brings into focus what it meant to be ‘modern’ in Brisbane in the 1920s and 1930s, and the extent to which flat-living was an expression of the modern age. It is argued that the impact of modernity on changing social and cultural values was an essential pre-condition for the acceptance of flat-living in interwar Brisbane. Further, it is argued that the role of women in facilitating change and in encouraging notions of the ‘modern’ was fundamental to the interwar promotional ‘glamorisation’ of the flat lifestyle.

In chapter nine (‘Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners’), census data is utilised to profile heads of households who resided in a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933. Through supplementary published contemporary writing, a strong correlation between women, investment in flats, and owner-occupation of flat buildings is identified. In addition, the role of ‘mum-and-dad’ investors and speculators is examined.

Chapter ten (‘New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’”) takes the form of a case study. New Farm was one of the earliest suburbs of Brisbane. Within easy walking distance of the central business district, it attracted much flat development (both house conversions and purpose-built flats) during the interwar years, and was recognised by contemporaries as Brisbane’s premier interwar flat district. The case study offers an opportunity to test and exemplify the findings of, and arguments posited in, previous chapters.
Chapter eleven (‘A ‘vernacular modernity’”) concludes the thesis with a summation of findings and arguments regarding the flat tradition, modernity and flats, then looks to the impact and legacy of the interwar flat buildings as cultural assets.

Appendices
There are a number of appendices attached to this study.

Appendix 13 is a stand-alone document, compiled as Volume 2, and informs all chapters in the study. It comprises a spreadsheet of all the purpose-built flats (including maisonettes and ‘pairs of flats’) which I have identified as having been erected in the Brisbane metropolitan area during the study period (1920-1941). While reference to a number of other planned developments has been located during the research, it has not always been possible to identify whether they came to fruition; such cases do not appear in the spreadsheet.

The remaining appendices are mostly chapter specific. However, it is recommended that Appendix 1, which provides an overview of the vocabulary of multiple-occupancy dwellings, with emphasis on the cultural variations specific to the context of interwar Brisbane, be read prior to the main chapters. It is important to note, for example, that the current use of the word ‘apartment’ in Brisbane differs from that of the interwar period, and that the distinctions made between ‘flat’, ‘tenement’ and ‘residential’ (used as a noun) took some time to evolve, but were fundamental to the interwar understanding of multiple-dwelling buildings.
Literature Review

This study of Brisbane's interwar flats and flat-living is located firmly within the burgeoning field of academic, interdisciplinary research into the historical evolution of Australia's urban landscapes, including studies of interwar flats and flat life. It draws on studies of multiple-dwelling buildings as a fundamental urban form in western cultures; from current interest in women's history; and from renewed academic interest in modernity and Modernism in Australia.

Interdisciplinary study of urbanisation in Australia

Australian urban studies emanates from a variety of disciplines, including geography, town planning, sociology, economics, history and architecture. Interdisciplinary and comparative in nature, its origins can be traced to the 1970s with the work of urban geographers such as Graeme Neutze (1977) and I.H. Burnley (1980), planning historian Leonie Sandercock (1977) and urban historian Peter Spearritt (1978). Neutze and Burnley, who have been highly influential in the study of Australian urbanisation, applied international models of urban growth to the Australian context, placing Australian urbanisation within a global pattern of development.6 Urban geographer Lionel Frost similarly located the patterns of development in Australian cities within a global context, arguing that, in the nineteenth century:

Physically and spatially, the compact, land-intensive cities of Sydney, Brisbane, and Hobart more closely resembled those of Britain, Europe and eastern North America, than they did the other Australian cities. Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth were of far lower density, with sprawling suburbs like those of the cities of the American West.7

Due to the diversity of the subject matter, urban studies usually adopt an interdisciplinary perspective. Burnley, for example, positioned himself as a ‘human geographer’, seeking to ‘integrate findings from numerous studies in urban geography, urban sociology and urban economics which convey a developmental picture of Australian cities and the Australian urban system in transition’.8 As a corollary to this

8 Burnley, p1.
concept, some urban geographers have interpreted Australian cities as human, rather than physical, environments. Clive Forster, for example, argues that the patterns of change in Australian urbanisation must be balanced by an awareness of historical continuity, that ‘We live, to a large extent, in yesterday’s cities’.  

Common to the work of most Australian urban analysts is their preoccupation with the suburbanisation of Australian cities. Peter Spearritt, in his early and seminal historical-social analysis of the evolution of twentieth-century Sydney, identified suburbanisation as the principal characteristic of Sydney’s development through the fluctuating economic conditions of the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, and emphasised that the 1920s was ‘an unparalleled decade of suburban growth’.  

He further found that the building of flats in Sydney never seriously challenged the construction of detached dwellings, and the concomitant expansion of suburbia, as the preferred residential model, describing the flat trend and the associated lifestyle as ‘the antithesis of suburbia’. My work on Brisbane’s interwar flats similarly explores this antithesis, but also identifies a symbiosis between the rising popularity of inner suburban flats and the outer suburban sprawl.

Neutze acknowledged that the flat boom of the interwar years partly explained the falling proportion of owner-occupied dwellings in all Australian capital cities between 1921 and 1947, but also argued that the impact was negligible in affecting the overall population density of capital cities. In other words, the popularity of flat-living did not challenge the suburban lifestyle.

Forster (1995) argues that during the 1920s, economic and technological changes greatly influenced the expansion of Australian suburbs. In the work on Brisbane’s interwar flats, I suggest that these changes concomitantly created the conditions under which flat-living flourished.

The most comprehensive studies of Brisbane urbanisation and suburbanisation to date are found in Gordon Greenwood and John Laverty’s 1959 historical overview of the

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10 Spearritt, p.xi.
11 Spearritt, p.70.
12 Neutze, p.35.
13 Forster, pp13-14.

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Interpreting the modern: *flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941*.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
history of Brisbane’s first century of municipal government, and in Ronald Lawson’s 1973 analysis of Brisbane’s urban geographical development to circa 1900. Both works highlighted the expansion of suburbia during the 1880s, a period of strong economic growth in Queensland, which was reflected and magnified in the capital city. Greenwood and Laverty drew attention to rapid interwar suburbanisation in their work on the formation of Greater Brisbane in the 1920s.

My work on the growing popularity of investing and living in flat buildings in interwar Brisbane is placed within the context of this rapidly expanding suburbia and the efforts of an emerging town planning movement to control urban development in the 1920s and 1930s.

The interwar suburbanisation of Australian cities took place during an influential era in the development of urban planning in this country, but the history of Australia’s town planning movement has only recently received the attention from historians that it deserves. Urban historians such as Robert Freestone (1989), Graeme Davison (1995) and Max Grubb (with Freestone) (1995) write of the strong influence of contemporary overseas planning models – such as the British ‘garden city’ and American ‘city functional’ – on Australia’s early-twentieth-century town planning and the suburbanisation process. Freestone and Grubb place the move to city functionalism within the ‘Americanization of Australian planning’, which in turn was just one aspect of the Americanisation of Australian culture from the early 1920s, via popular magazines and movies. As Freestone and Grubb pointed out, Brisbane was the only Australian city in which the ‘greater city’ unification movement succeeded in the interwar period. I consider the strength of the town planning movement in shaping the development of Brisbane, as a fundamental context to my study of the city’s interwar flats.

16 Freestone and Grubb, p.6.
In the 1980s and 1990s a number of popular and academic histories concerned with the evolution of Australian dwellings were published.\(^\text{17}\)^ All privileged the detached house as the historically dominant and preferred mode of residential accommodation in Australia. In most of this literature, ‘house’ is equated with ‘home’, and generally with owner-occupiers. None of these works addresses the development of multiple-residency dwellings in this country.

The two most disappointing publications in this respect are Peter Freeman and Judy Vulker (eds) *The Australian Dwelling* (1991) and Patrick Troy (ed) *A History of European Housing in Australia* (2000). The former is a collection of 16 papers by leading Australian architects, conservation architects and architectural historians, presented at a conference held by the RAIA at Bishop's Lodge, South Hay, New South Wales in May 1990. In his introduction Freeman describes the theme of the volume as ‘the Australian dwelling in its historic and modern contexts’. The compilation deals principally with the historical form and function of Australian housing, with some chapters on house interiors. Multiple-dwelling buildings are not dealt with, and ‘dwelling’ is equated with the detached house.

*A History of European Housing in Australia* is an interdisciplinary collection of 18 scholarly essays purporting to be ‘the first systematic attempt to explain the social, administrative, technical and cultural history of 'European' housing in Australia.’\(^\text{18}\) Troy acknowledges that the work investigates only the Australian ‘house and home’. There is ‘only passing reference to multi-unit dwellings or flats, not because they are not important forms of accommodation but because this form has only become significant in relatively recent times.’\(^\text{19}\) Given that purpose-designed blocks of flats were being constructed in Sydney from the 1910s and in most Australian metropolitan areas by the 1920s, and that thousands of houses in every capital city were converted into flats to

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\(^{18}\) Troy, back cover.

\(^{19}\) Troy, p2.
cope with the crisis in domestic housing supply from the early 1900s to the 1950s, the decision not to include a chapter on flats appears to be a significant oversight.

**Studies of Australian interwar flats**

In his ground-breaking mid-twentieth-century study of Australian vernacular domestic building\(^20\), Robin Boyd made passing reference to interwar flat construction, mainly in terms of architectural value or as an aberration in the great expansion of owner-occupied suburbia. Boyd's principal argument was that flats did not flourish until the second half of the 1930s and then principally in Sydney. Melbourne flats were more suburban and restricted in height levels and 'There were only faint echoes of the movement in other capital cities.' Possibly drawing upon personal experience, Boyd identified what he considered to be the main attractions of living in a small flat at this period, especially to young people: low rent; escape from suburbia; the 'glamour' of high-rise living; less spending on furniture due to the compactness of flats and the provision of built-in cupboards; and Sydney harbour views. He was in effect referencing interwar notions of the modern as determinants for flat-living.\(^21\) This is a recurrent, but to date under-investigated, theme in historical research on Australian interwar flats.

The first to publish substantial research on twentieth-century flats in Australia was Richard Cardew, who approached the topic from the perspective of urban geography.\(^22\) Employing geographical models of urban development along with historical quantitative analysis derived principally from census and civic statistics, Cardew examined the history of the flat in Australian cities according to the determinants of demand; the market structure of the building industry; and spatial pattern. While purporting to be 'a geographically comprehensive analysis of flat development in Australia since the inception of flats at the turn of the century',\(^23\) this early work is essentially a Sydney case-study seeking to understand the historical background to the proliferation and popularity of flats in that city in the 1960s. It was not intended as a social history and did not address the cultural determinants of the flat phenomenon.


\(^{21}\) Boyd, pp273-4.


\(^{23}\) Cardew, p1.
In 1980 Cardew condensed his 1970 analysis to provide an excellent statistical analysis of the pattern of flat construction in Sydney from the 1910s to the 1940s, based on census statistics and local government records. Unlike Boyd, who had suggested that the popular trend toward flat-living in Sydney was not evident until the 1930s, Cardew provided empirical evidence to demonstrate that from the 1910s, flats were being built in substantial numbers in Sydney and that ‘the trend toward the suburbanisation of flats was well under way in the second half of the 1920s’.

Drawing largely from census and civic statistics but qualifying this with reference to contemporary writing about flats, Spearritt (1978) hypothesised that the strong growth in the number of flats constructed in Sydney in the period 1935-1941 occurred despite substantial moral opposition. Being a brief overview of flat developments within a larger work on the evolution of twentieth-century Sydney, Spearritt's analysis did not explore this ‘moral opposition’ in great detail; nor did he ask or answer the sociological question: why did Sydney residents turn to flat-living in such large numbers at this period? Furthermore, he concentrated on the statistically and physically identifiable purpose-built flats of inner Sydney and the harbour and beach-side suburbs, and did not examine the issue of house conversions.

Ruth Thompson’s 1986 unpublished doctoral thesis on Sydney’s flats traces the rise of flat-living in Sydney from the early 1900s to the early 1980s, concentrating principally on the post-1945 period and on landlord-tenant relationships. The historical impetus for flats is only briefly addressed, but Thompson explores the attitudes of the ‘physical determinists’ of the 1920s and 1930s in her analysis of early social and political antagonism to flats and attempts to regulate flat developments at this period. A similar pattern has emerged in the present study of Brisbane’s interwar flats, in which strong opposition to, and control of, flat developments is identified.

In the early 1980s, architects turned their attention to interwar flats, with undergraduate theses on flats as a ‘type’ undertaken in Melbourne and Sydney. In Terry Sawyer’s

26 Spearritt, p70.
1982 analysis of the Melbourne flat as a built form, a distinction is made between city blocks of flats (many of which pre-dated 1920) and suburban flats. Factors affecting location and form are identified as well. There is an interesting synopsis of social attitudes to the flat, but this work is not concerned with the wider historical context and does not address geographical, economic or political factors influencing flat developments.28

In the 1990s, academic architect Donald Dunbar began a comparative analysis of flats in Sydney and Melbourne.29 Although largely concerned with the flat building as object, Dunbar makes an important contribution to the historiography of interwar flats. His exploration of local council ordinances and Victorian and New South Wales legislation governing flat construction, as well as his investigation of market forces driving investment in flat buildings through case-studies of interwar flats in St Kilda in Melbourne and Waverley (Bondi) in Sydney, are particularly useful.30 In comparing Sydney and Melbourne flat buildings of the 1920s and 1930s, Dunbar considers ‘the physical attributes of topography, location and transport … and the influence of these on the building form, plan shape, site coverage and heights, and addresses the significant effect on flat buildings caused by differences between the political, planning and financial operations within each city.’31 He employs empirical analysis to support his arguments, which lie within an architectural, rather than a sociological or historical, paradigm.

In the 1990s social and urban historians showed renewed – and geographically broadened – interest in Australian interwar flats, as evidenced by the work of Jenny Gregory and Robyn Taylor (1992) in Perth, and Seamus O’Hanlon (1997) in

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28 Terry Sawyer, *Residential flats in Melbourne; The Development of a Building Type to 1950*, Architecture Faculty, Melbourne University (B. Arch. research report), 1982; see also K.C. Crestani, ‘Flats in Sydney 1905-1940’, School of Architecture, NSW Institute of Technology (elective project), 1983.


Melbourne. In tracing the development of flat-building in Perth in the interwar period, Gregory and Taylor argued that this trend, strongest in the 1930s, was located within broad contemporary debates on urban planning and morality, especially the notion of garden suburbs (‘horizontal city’) versus high-rise living and working (‘vertical city’). At the local level, these debates included: notions of flats as the ‘slums of tomorrow’ and civic controls on flat construction; flats as lucrative investments; flats as the result of ‘the servant problem’; and flats as expression of the ultra-modern. The last of these notions was linked to the ‘vertical city’ movement and to the idea ‘that modern man had the capacity to alter his environment to create a perfect city and that new forms of housing would encourage the inhabitants of the city to take an active role in civic affairs’.

In his work on Melbourne's early flats, O'Hanlon analysed the rate books of two inner city municipalities - Melbourne and St Kilda - to deduce statistics on flat location, ownership and occupancy in the period 1900-1950. He argued that ‘flats were occupied by diverse social groups and were built as investments for business families and women in the interwar period as more traditional investments such as housing and the sharemarket lost appeal’. A similar pattern has emerged in the research on Brisbane flats.

Caroline Butler-Bowden and Charles Pickett’s more recent publication tracing the twentieth-century history of Australian flat and apartment buildings was produced to accompany the exhibition Homes in the Sky conducted at the Museum of Sydney from 12 May to 26 August 2007. It is the first published work offering an overview of flat and apartment trends in Australian metropolitan areas and in popular Australian seaside resorts, arranged in a loose chronology of themes and type of building. Their discussion of community antipathy to flat life and their chapter on inner-city apartments 1920-1950 are particularly relevant to the Brisbane context. However, while the
presence of interwar flats in Brisbane and Perth is acknowledged, the emphasis remains on the Sydney and Melbourne experiences. It is anticipated that the present study will broaden and balance the view that interwar flat-living was mainly a Sydney or Melbourne phenomenon.

Studies of overseas multiple-occupancy dwellings

Several key studies of overseas flat and apartment buildings provide important comparative frameworks for the analysis of Brisbane’s interwar flats. Australian flats of the period were influenced principally by British and American models, which in turn were largely influenced by European (especially French) multiple-dwelling buildings. The pace and timing of the expansion in popularity of English flats in particular can be paralleled with that of flat trends in Australia, although the former were associated more closely with municipal slum clearance programs of the 1930s than were their antipodean counterparts.

British historian Roger Smith argues that in the Western European tradition, urban living in tenements was the norm, and that the long tradition of English cottage housing was abnormal. Australia, along with other former British colonies, inherited this domestic ‘aberration’, taking detached housing and home ownership to even greater extremes than the mother country. The work on Brisbane’s interwar flats is situated within this context as well.

Like most of the Australian work on interwar flats, Anthony Sutcliffe positions the British interwar flat movement within the ‘great flat debate’, that is, flat versus suburban villa, claiming that ‘an understanding of the development and various fortunes of the British flat is essential to any appreciation of the tenacity and significance of our predominant small-house tradition’. In ground-breaking work on flats in England, Alison Ravetz

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36 British urban historians writing on the interwar flat movement have a considerable advantage over Australian researchers, namely their access to a wealth of contemporary studies on interwar housing, including flats. Much of this material relates to local government housing schemes and other forms of subsidised housing, for which there is little Australian equivalent.


39 Sutcliffe, pix.
analysed the interwar 'revolution' in which the concept of working class 'tenement' was transformed into the idea of the 'modern flat'. She identified key contemporary arguments for flat development in the interwar period, including: the economics of city development, social exigency, technical innovation, social idealism, continental example, fine architecture, and the preservation of rural land. Ravetz further argued that the first two were familiar nineteenth-century arguments, but that the remainder were specific to the twentieth century. Both Ravetz and Sutcliffe argued that the privately-built blocks of middle-class flats appearing in London, in provincial cities and at the seaside in the late 1920s, lent respectability to the working-class council flat.40

Social historian John Burnett similarly linked the idea of flats to notions of modernity, albeit still positioned within the overall English preference for the suburban cottage and garden.41 Paradoxically, in Scotland, which gave the English language the term ‘flat’ in the sixteenth century, flats or tenements lost favour to the garden city movement and the rise of Scottish suburbia in the interwar period.42

Architectural historian Andrew Alpern traced the architectural evolution of the affluent New York apartment house and its rapid social acceptance.43 Through photographic evidence and floor plans, Alpern illustrated how ostentation and opulence in middle-class New York apartment building peaked in the early years of the twentieth century; how apartments became more compact, functional and less dependent on servants in the 1920s and 1930s; and how few spacious apartments were constructed after the mid-1930s.

Elizabeth Hawes used primary sources to document the shift from middle and upper-class suburban-dwelling to apartment-living in New York City in the period 1869-1930.44 Arguing that ‘the apartment house belonged as much to the broader mission of reform as to the narrower issue of supply and demand’45, she located the move to apartments firmly in the dismantling of the social and political structures that bound 'Old

40 Ravetz, p125; Sutcliffe, p17.
41 Burnett, 1986.
42 Smith, 1974.
45 Hawes, pxiv.
New York’ prior to the Civil War (1860-1865), and linked the adoption of the middle and upper-class New York apartment house, derived from the French flat, with notions of modernity. Her work on the association of contemporary notions of modernity with the flat lifestyle is particularly relevant to my work on Brisbane’s interwar flats.

**Australian women’s history**

Another framework in which I have positioned the study of Brisbane’s interwar flats is the changing roles of women in the home and in the workplace, about which a considerable volume of late-twentieth-century scholarship has been produced.

The first wave of late-twentieth-century feminists (1970s) tended to view women as an oppressed collective, for whom a common voice needed to be found.\(^46\) Class was considered a determinant of women’s occupational roles, but cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and regional divisions were largely unexplored. However, writing about women’s work from less patriarchal, patronising and male-centric perspectives than earlier historians, feminist authors emphasised the significance of women’s unpaid work (both within the home and in the community), and examined the shift to occupations formerly the prerogative of men, such as shop assisting and office and factory work.\(^47\)

By the late 1980s, writers of women’s history were arguing that it was time to move beyond the ‘woman as victim’ approach and beyond the 1970s feminist construction of ‘women’s common socialisation and common powerlessness in the face of male

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\(^{46}\) In the 1970s Australian feminism found a voice in the ‘baby-boomers’ emerging from the universities, who produced a strong body of research on women’s occupational and societal roles. Feminist historians such as Kingston (1975), Ryan and Conlon (1975); Curthoys, Eade and Spearritt (1975) and McMurchy, Oliver and Thornley (1983) began to position Australian women within an historiography which to that date had almost universally ignored the contribution of women to Australian society and culture (the traditional spheres with which women are associated), let alone to the realms of the economy and politics.

structured hierarchies\textsuperscript{48} – that the differences between women should be investigated and celebrated.\textsuperscript{49} Others have argued that the ability of the individual to negotiate their circumstances is equally important.\textsuperscript{50}

Despite the extent of academic writing on the history of women’s work in Australia, the participation of women in property ownership is largely unexplored – no doubt due in considerable measure to the difficulties of identifying the extent of this participation. For example, the primary source data relied on in my work on Brisbane’s interwar flats – including Brisbane City Council records, census statistics and land titles information – indicates the presence of women in the flat ‘trend’ as both owners and occupiers, but rarely illuminates the role of women in flat ownership; that is, whether they were conducting enterprises in their own right, or on behalf of a husband or other male relative. However, through the use of supplementary documentary material, this study contributes some additional insights into the role of women as property owners in Australia during the interwar period.

Theoretical framework

This thesis is a work of historical research, analysis, interpretation and writing. It is informed by the principles of the ‘new history’\textsuperscript{51} of the late twentieth century, which focuses on the concepts of ‘history from below’ and the production of social and cultural history.

Central to the methodology employed in this study is an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative documentary evidence (refer to the discussion of Methodology which follows), which I use in tandem to produce a version of historical ‘truth’ as objectively as possible.

The use of quantitative evidence is grounded in the sustained preoccupation in historiography with the application of scientific principles to historical analysis. While historians no longer focus exclusively on ‘explanatory history’ and on the production of positivist macrohistories,\textsuperscript{52} the emphasis on the use of documented evidence from which hypotheses can be tested and conclusions drawn exercises an enduring appeal for historians. Empiricism can be empowering, reinforcing the notion of ‘historical truth’,\textsuperscript{53} albeit no longer considered an absolute truth. As Willie Thompson writes:

I remain attached to a conviction of the centrality of scientific method and the scientific tradition of the past four centuries. ... I believe that veritable knowledge is possible, though mostly provisional and always incomplete.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{51} In the early 1990s, historiographer Peter Burke identified a number of characteristics of the ‘new history’: an awareness of cultural relativism, or the concept that historical reality is socially and culturally constructed (both in the past and in the present), which in turn leads to a questioning of objectivity in historical writing; the analysis of societal and cultural structures; concern with ‘history from below’; an emphasis on historical sources other than documents, such as visual and oral sources and statistics; a concern with historical trends and movements rather than just individual actions and events; and the interdisciplinary nature of the new history, which borrows from anthropology, economics, literary criticism, psychology, sociology, art, literature and science (Peter Burke ‘Overture: the New History, its Past and its Future’, pp1-23 in Peter Burke (ed.), \textit{New Perspectives on Historical Writing}, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1991, pp1-6).

\textsuperscript{52} Cultural historians/historiographers Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob describe Leopold von Ranke’s influential nineteenth-century concept of history writing as ‘explanatory history’, a search for laws of historical development that ‘enabled the west to understand itself and the rest of the world within one universal, secular framework compatible with the universality of Newtonian laws’ (Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, \textit{Telling the Truth about History}, New York: WW Norton, 1995, pp52-3).


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To frame an approach to using qualitative evidence derived from published contemporary interwar commentary, reports, and articles, I have drawn on the work of cultural historians, whose role has been described as one of searching for ‘codes, clues, hints, signs, gestures, and artefacts through which people communicate their values and their truths’. 55

‘Cultural history’ has been defined variously as the history of ‘unspoken assumptions and of representations’56 and the study of ‘the belief systems, world views and cognitive frameworks’ that give meaning to people’s lives.57 According to this conception, cultural history is broader and more inclusive than the social history popularised in the 1950s and 1960s. Cultural historians therefore recognise a multiplicity of historical perspectives, and of historical ‘truths’ (albeit not absolute truths). Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt consider that cultural historians:

... emphasize empirical, comparative, and theoretically informed and informing studies. They have not given up on social or causal explanation; rather, they seek better explanation ... they still insist on some fruitful analogies to science: the research problem should be carefully specified, the evidence carefully gathered, and comparisons employed to ensure generalizability.58

Hunt further summarised the cultural historian’s methodology in the following terms:

... the accent in cultural history is on close examination – of texts, of pictures, and of actions – and on open-mindedness to what those examinations will reveal, rather than on elaboration of new master narratives or social theories ... 59

The theory and methodology of cultural history has provided an important direction for my work on Brisbane’s interwar flats, which I argue were promoted as expressions of contemporary notions of ‘modernity’. The interwar popularity of flats, especially those

55 Appleby, Hunt & Jacob, p218.
that were purpose-designed and purpose-built, was not simply a reflection of population pressure and economic incentives. A cultural shift that positioned flat-living as socially acceptable and the lifestyle they generated as an expression of ‘being modern’, were essential pre-conditions to the acceptance of flats as an alternative to life in detached houses. Further, I have focussed on the empowering effect of modernity on women, as exemplified in their participation in the shift to flat-dwelling, both as owners and occupants, and also as targeted consumers.

Through a close reading of the language and cultural artefacts (in this case, interwar flat buildings) associated with the popular promotion of modernity in interwar Brisbane, I have sought to understand, describe, and create meaning from, the contemporary interwar preoccupation with ‘being modern’ and the cultural processes that shaped interwar visions of urban modernity. It has been important, therefore, to establish an understanding of the term ‘modernity’ and its relationship with aesthetic Modernism – both as currently interpreted by historians, and as understood by interwar commentators.

Academic work has drawn attention to the contradictory or ‘oppositional meanings’ of the words modern/modernity/modernism, as used within modernist studies and historiography. From one perspective, ‘modernity’ meant order and the power of science and technology, on which the modern world was predicated. Modernity was associated with the type of rational thinking and rigorous, objective scientific investigation and analysis that resulted in the production of new technologies and the translation of those technologies into everyday life.60

From another perspective, modernity meant a break from tradition and the offer of personal freedom, a sense of abandonment of regulation and rigour. To quote Susan Friedman:

Modernity is best grasped as a set of meanings that encompasses both the specificities of nouns and the relational structures of comparative adjectives. ... modernity encompasses both centripetal and centrifugal forces in contradiction and constant interplay … a dialogic that pits the contradictory processes of formation and deformation against each other, each as necessary to the other.61

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61 Friedman, p505.
T.J. Clark, in his seminal work *Farewell to an idea. Episodes from a History of Modernism* (1999), suggested of modernity ‘that most readers know it when they see it.’ In other words, we all seem to possess an understanding of what modernity implies, without necessarily knowing what it means. This was certainly the case in interwar Brisbane society. However, Clark does offer a definition of modernity, suggesting that ‘Modernity means contingency’, linking it with what he terms the ‘secularisation’ of social life inherent in capitalist consumerist society. For Clark, ‘modernity’ is symptomatic of ‘a social order which has turned from the worship of ancestors and past authorities to the pursuit of a projected future – of goods, pleasures, freedoms, forms of control over nature, or infinities of information’. Clark also recognised that this is now a minority view.62

From the 1990s there has emerged a growing body of ‘new modernist studies’, as writers in both the social sciences and the arts re-interpret the twentieth century, and in particular the relationship between modernity and Modernism (or Modernisms). As one reviewer has written: ‘Modernism is up for grabs. Or at least for reassessment.’63 This interest was epitomised in the 1994 establishment of the journal *Modernism/Modernity*, published by Johns Hopkins University. In addition to the contributed articles, each issue features at least half a dozen reviews of new publications in the field.

In his work on the notion of the city in Modernist literature David Frisby has argued that although in common parlance the word ‘modernity’ is associated with historical periodisation – ‘changes in historical time and consciousness, with an emphasis upon accelerating change’ and ‘an identification of the present as modernity’ – there are at least three ways in which the idea of modernity is conceptualised:

The closer the concept of modernity is to that of modernization, the more it is likely to become a conceptualization of historical periodization. Where the concept is closer to aesthetic modernisms it is more likely to become a conceptualization of modes or qualities of modern social experience. A third, more recent conceptualization of modernity is as a historical project. None of these concepts of modernity is without analytical and methodological problems.64

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In common with much current academic discourse on the nature of modernity and its relationship to the twentieth-century Modernist movement, Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly, editors of *Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia 1870s-1960s* (2008) reject the idea of modernity as ‘a progressive sequence’ or ‘a rupture or series of ruptures with the past’. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Michel Serres, Dixon and Kelly argue that ‘modernity is multi-temporal and its spaces are heteronomous, an amalgam of the past, the contemporary and the future’.65

Dixon and Kelly further reject the idea that modernity in Australia was a wholly imported experience, a form of ‘passive reception’, to argue that Euro-centric modernity was modified by local historical circumstances and culture. They argue that the essays in *Impact of the Modern* reveal ‘the modern vernacular as defined through Australian social knowledges, consumption patterns, economic and political initiatives, popular pastimes and cultural practices.’66 In her review of this volume for *Modernism/Modernity* early in 2010, Tanya Dalziell suggests that along with other recent Australian academic works, *Impact of the Modern* seeks ‘to examine, readjust, and overturn ... apologetic, colonial-hued models of ‘the modern,’ and indeed of ‘Australia’.’67

Dixon and Kelly drew inspiration for the title of their compilation from the work of Miriam Hansen, in her 1999 analysis of early American classical cinema. Working from the ‘nexus between modernism and modernity’, Hansen argues that:

> While the spread of urban-industrial technology, the large-scale disembedding of social (and gender) relations, and the shift to mass consumption entailed processes of real destruction and loss, there also emerged new modes of organizing vision and sensory perception, a new relationship with “things,” different forms of mimetic experience and expression, of affectivity, temporality, and reflexivity, a changing fabric of everyday life, sociability, and leisure. From this perspective, I take the study of modernist aesthetics to encompass cultural practices that both articulated and mediated the experience of modernity, such as the mass-produced and mass-consumed phenomena of fashion, design, advertising, architecture and urban environment, of photography, radio, and

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66 Dixon and Kelly, pxix.

cinema. I am referring to this kind of modernism as ‘vernacular’ (and avoiding the ideologically overdetermined term ‘popular’) because the term vernacular combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability”. 68

I similarly find this conception of modernity valuable for my work on Brisbane’s interwar flats. In interwar Brisbane, modernity, and the status of ‘being modern’, were largely derivative concepts, modelled on overseas western patterns of development and thinking, and often translated through Sydney and Melbourne intellectuals and professionals. However, I argue that at the juncture of this ‘imported’ modernity and the particular circumstances of life in Brisbane in the 1920s and 1930s, there was created a ‘vernacular modernity’, an interpretation of what it meant to be modern in Brisbane at this period.

Feminist perspectives in the revived discourse on modernity and Modernism offer a further fruitful source of direction. 69 The interrelationships between the growth of a gendered (female) consumer society and the rise of modernity in the first few decades of the twentieth century is a recurrent theme within the new approaches to the study of modernity and modernism, and one from which I have extrapolated in discussing the association of women with Brisbane’s interwar flats - as occupants, owners and as the targeted market in promotions of the modern flat and flat lifestyle. In effect, women were in the vanguard of social and cultural modernity.

In summary, my work on the fashion for living in flats in interwar Brisbane draws from interdisciplinary, cultural history theory and practice to present an argument for the ‘flat fashion’ to be construed as evidence of the impact of a vernacular modernity in which flat-dwelling represented the epitome of modernity, and flat-dwellers were ‘moderns’.

Methodology

This thesis takes as its starting point the cultural object – the purpose-built block of interwar flats – which I argue constitutes a valuable legacy of interwar urban life. From this has evolved an exploration of the pre-conditions and motivating factors for the fashion for living in flats (of all types) in the interwar period, and a cultural construction of flat-dwelling in Brisbane as a modern lifestyle.

In line with recent cultural history theory this study is based on empirical research, drawn from three key source types: qualitative data in the form of published contemporary observations, reports, articles, notices and so forth; quantitative contemporary data found in published statistics such as census reports and yearbooks, and local government records; and visual confirmation/inspection (principally external) of surviving flat buildings. Each of these source types offers a check and counter-balance to the others in the acquisition of the research data, and provides opportunity to test concepts and assumptions with empirical rigour.

A close and extensive analysis of primary source documents has been fundamental to the research. Targeted material included: Commonwealth census reports; Queensland government publications including yearbooks, gazettes, and parliamentary papers; local government records; newspapers, trade journals and lifestyle magazines of the interwar period; post office directories, gazetteers and almanacs; photographic collections; plan collections; and manuscript collections.

With the print media, the research focussed on the Brisbane Courier/Courier-Mail’s weekly ‘Building and Real Estate’ pages; the Daily Mail’s weekly ‘Construction and Real Estate’ pages; the Sunday Mail’s weekly ‘Home Beautiful’ pages; and the Telegraph’s ‘Building and Home’ pages. In 2009-2010, the Brisbane Courier and Courier-Mail for the interwar period were made available by the National Library of Australia for on-line searching, which facilitated the research on individual flat buildings. Every available edition between the 1910s and 1941 of monthly journals such as The Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland (Brisbane), Building (Sydney) and The Home (Sydney) was scrutinised.
It was not difficult to develop an empathy with the popular writing and culture of the study period. The interwar years constitute a recent and well-documented past. The localities, places, and many of the buildings in which the shift to flat-living occurred in Brisbane remain; they are as familiar in the present as they are in past documents and images. Furthermore, the advertising techniques associated with the shift to flat-living are not dissimilar to the consumer-driven advertising of today, and touch many of the same resonances within targeted groups.

While achieving this ‘empathy’, I have also sought to maintain some distance and objectivity from the documentary material. If the work of the historian is to critically evaluate the documentary evidence, and to then draw conclusions and to present these in the form of an historical narrative, then it is necessary to identify and assess the agendas behind much contemporaneous interwar writing. Roger Chartier suggests that source documents should be considered in terms of ‘the triangular relationship between the text as conceived by the author, as printed by the publisher, and as read (or heard) by the reader’.70 While deeply immersed in the concept of interwar modernity presented in the contemporary press, I have at the same time attempted, through close reading of the documentary material and from known information regarding the possible motives and objectives of authors and editors, to critically examine this source material.

Furthermore, throughout the thesis I have made considerable use of direct quotations, to ensure that the historical narrative I write does not obscure the popular thinking and attitudes of the interwar period, and that interwar writing is understood within the terms familiar and available to interwar Brisbane society and culture, and not purely in my own analytical terms. I consider it important that the cultural values of the period infuse the analytical historical narrative, to balance the cultural relativity that I, as the writer, inevitably bring to the work.

Quantitative data relating to the number of purpose-designed blocks of flats approved for construction in Brisbane has been obtained from a variety of sources, principally the Brisbane City Council's Registers of Buildings Approvals, 1904-1941. Queensland yearbooks and the reports of the Commonwealth censuses of 1911, 1921 and 1933 have been utilised to establish patterns of growth and distribution of flats and
tenements within the Brisbane metropolitan area, and to profile flat occupants and owners. Use of the 1947 national census is more problematic because it is well beyond the period of study. Refer to Appendices 2 and 3 for notes regarding constraints in using the census data and Brisbane City Council records.

Visual external inspection has been fundamental to the research. I am in the fortunate position that so many of Brisbane’s interwar flats survive, so that a study of these structures as an urban form is not limited to literature or archaeological remnant for information. Many of the surviving purpose-built flat buildings have been thoroughly renovated; some no longer function as residential flats; and in some areas the neighbourhood has been subject to considerable redevelopment. In most situations, however, the surviving purpose-built flat buildings can still be ‘read’ as multiple-occupancy dwellings, and in combination with documentary evidence, they have proved to be an important primary source of information.

Similarly, despite the processes of inner urban ‘gentrification’ and substantial ‘urban renewal’ since the 1970s, a surprising number of the interwar house conversions survive in Brisbane. Owing to their ubiquity and to the lack of conclusive local government records or statistics, it has been impossible to quantify precisely the number of house conversions of the interwar period, and so no attempt has been made to do so. However, those that survive provide illustrative evidence of a once highly popular activity.

The flat tradition
The increasing popularity of residential flats in Brisbane in the interwar period was a product of local economic, demographic, political and socio-cultural trends, colliding with a globalised, mass-market push for ‘the modern’ which, by the early twentieth century, had become part of the fabric of Western culture. Although Brisbane’s interwar flats were a parochial response to particular local conditions, they should be viewed within two wider contexts: the lengthy Western tradition of building and living in flats; and local reaction to post-war global solutions to housing large urban populations.

The construction of flats, apartments and tenements in Europe in the wake of the Great War of 1914-1918 – particularly high-rise workers’ housing schemes – was a phenomenon of the age, but not specific to it. Western societies have had long cultural experience of multiple-occupancy dwellings. Apartments, tenements and flats are among the earliest forms of residential accommodation, found in the defensive palace citadels of Sumeria through to the appartimenta of Imperial Rome. They are urban phenomena, historically symptomatic of densely populated centres in which available residential land is scarce and at an economic premium.

Subsequent waves of significant-scale apartment and tenement construction in Europe synchronised with key phases in the evolution of urban economies: the rise of medieval trade centres; and the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century. In the 1800s, European concepts of multiple-occupancy dwelling were exported throughout the imperialised world and to North America, where the great cities of the United States adopted the ‘French flat’ with astounding enthusiasm.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the principal historical periods of large-scale construction of multiple-occupancy dwellings in the Western world, providing the historical context in which Brisbane’s response to early flat developments may be understood.
The flat in history

Multiple-occupancy dwellings, comprising discrete residential suites or single rooms occupied by family units, constitute one of the earliest and most sustained forms of urban domestic accommodation. The equivalent of the apartment or tenement may have been known in the earliest urban cultures, located in the Tigris-Euphrates region in south-west Asia (Mesopotamia). From at least the fourth millennium BC most Mesopotamians lived in cities and the city-state was their basic socio-political unit. While excavation of Mesopotamian housing has been comparatively limited to date, recent work suggests that the elite classes had some experience of apartment living. Large, multiple-suite residences, commonly situated close to non-domestic structures such as temples or palaces, have been identified in a study of households of the Early Dynastic period (circa 3,000 BC). Probably accommodating wealthy, extended families of high status, these buildings (or remnants of buildings) may constitute the earliest identified multiple-dwelling residences.¹

In the Mediterranean region archaeologists claim to have identified ‘apartments’ in the great trading cities of ancient Minoa on the island of Crete. Interpretation and analysis of Minoan architecture is reliant largely upon empirical and contextual archaeological investigation, but recent work on the Late Minoan IIIC Vronda community at Kavousi has identified ‘individual residences within larger, agglomerative architectural complexes’.²

The existence of and motivations for these early multiple-occupancy residences remain speculative. What has been more convincingly demonstrated is that the conversion of the discarded homes of the wealthy into multiple-occupancy dwellings for the less affluent, so prevalent in Brisbane in the interwar period, also has its origins in Western antiquity.

Strong evidence survives from the late Hellenic period of former elite, single-family homes being converted into residential suites or rooms for artisans. Archaeological investigation of the wealthy residential quarter in ancient northern Eritrea (on the island of Euboea in Greece), established at the beginning of the fourth century BC, suggests that some of these homes had been divided into apartments by the end of that century, while others had been extended with attached workshops, indicating that by this period an artisan class had occupied the district.³

Further argument for the existence of multiple-dwelling buildings in the Hellenic world is presented by Richard Tomlinson, in a re-assessment of housing in ancient Alexandria. Tomlinson argues that if the early Greek historian and geographer, Strabo of Amasia, is correct in his claim that Hellenistic Alexandria at its peak in the first century BC accommodated a free population of 300,000 (which later excavations suggest was contained within a city area of about 10 square kilometres), then the traditional Greek courtyard houses (oikos) must have been converted into multi-storey tenements to accommodate this population (plus a servant-slave class), within such a small area.⁴

While classical Greece appears to have had some experience of multiple-dwelling buildings, the first significant period of tenement-living in terms of sophistication and quantity of apartment construction, and of surviving written and physical evidence for it, occurred in late Republican and Imperial Rome and at its harbour city of Ostia, from about the third century BC. During this period the traditional Roman domus (private, single-family house) gave way to the multiple-occupancy insula (island), as the republic and empire expanded and its urban population grew. The word insula, originally meaning a plot of land surrounded by streets, came to be applied both to the larger older domus converted to multiple occupancy, and to purpose-built apartment blocks of usually more than one storey. At the height of Imperial Rome the bulk of its urban population resided in appartimenta (partitioned rooms or suites). Statistics recorded in the mid-fourth century AD reveal that the city contained 46,602 insulae and only 1,797 domus.⁵


Archaeologists generally agree that the Roman tenement house evolved from the traditional shop (taberna) with loft or garret above, which was the most common form of proletarian housing prior to the development of insulae. Although the Romans were aware of the multiple-occupancy, multi-level dwellings of earlier cultures, these are considered unlikely to be direct influences on the development of the Roman appartimenta. If there were precedents for the Roman high-rise, they most probably permeated from late Hellenic Greece.

The invention of concrete (opus caementicum), which was in general use in Rome by the second century BC, was the single most important factor facilitating the construction of multiple-level Roman apartment buildings. Most of the purpose-designed insulae averaged three to four storeys (sometimes up to six), and incorporated shops or workshops on the ground floor with rooms or suites on the floors above. Archaeological investigations at the port of Ostia suggest that urban workers were housed in multi-level tenement buildings of possibly up to five storeys. No kitchens or bathrooms were provided, but numerous city restaurants (thermopolia) and public bath houses (thermae) compensated for these deficiencies.

The better-designed blocks had small internal courtyards to assist with ventilation and light, and windows to the street on the upper levels. Blocks of this type often accommodated patricians (upper classes) on the lower floors and plebeians (lower classes) on the less readily accessible upper floors. The more imposing buildings were exclusive to the patrician class and sometimes contained two-storeyed appartimenta, with large windows for light and air and balconies overlooking formal courtyard gardens. Occupants of these grand insulae shared the services of servants such as water carriers, porters, and sweepers, just as the occupants of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century luxury American apartment houses shared the services of domestic servants and concierges.

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6 Strabo, for example, writing his Geography of the known world in Augustan Rome during the years 18-24 AD, referred to multi-level housing in Babylon (Sumeria) and at the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Aradus at the eastern end of the Mediterranean (Strabo XVI pp.1, 2, 5, 13, 23 cited in McKay, pp83-4). Archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of Phoenician-Carthaginian multi-level buildings at Motya in Sicily, and the remnants of multi-level buildings at Syria, Carthage and Alexandria (McKay, p84).
7 McKay, pp83-4.
9 Hawes, pp20-1; McKay, pp88-9.
The majority of Roman *insulae* were cheaply and poorly constructed warrens of staircases and small rooms. As was symptomatic of much later tenement building in Europe from the eighteenth century, provision for heating, sanitary arrangements, light and air in the bulk of the Roman *insulae* was inadequate. Many were so poorly constructed that they were liable to collapse and fire was a regular hazard. So dangerous did these structures become that the Emperor Augustus (27 BC-AD 14), legislated to limit residential construction to 60 feet (18 metres) or five storeys in height, and after the great fire of Rome in AD 64, the Emperor Nero’s urban renewal program limited *insulae* to 70 feet (21 metres) in height and required a non-enclosed space of 10 feet (3 metres) between buildings.\(^\text{10}\)

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD, the tradition of urban apartment-living in Europe was lost for nearly a millennium. In a world of fiefdoms and small villages, experience of multiple-occupancy dwelling was restricted largely to the fortified castles of local rulers. Only with the re-emergence of large trading centres from the fifteenth century and the subsequent growth of city states, did multiple-level and multiple-dwelling buildings again became characteristic of European towns.

Steen Eiler Rasmussen, an influential twentieth-century Danish architect and town planner, has argued that the walled and fortified cities of the medieval period created the physical boundaries that produced multiple-storey living in pre-industrial societies. In the absence of strong central government, newly emergent wealthy city-states needed to be self-defending, and the increasingly restricted space and population pressures within these walled urban centres established the need to build upwards.\(^\text{11}\)

Anthony Sutcliffe, writing on the origins of European multiple-occupancy dwellings, similarly argues that one legacy of the medieval walled city was the emergence of town houses of three or more storeys, or purpose-built blocks of flats for the affluent, as in Edinburgh. Furthermore, as desirable or fashionable residential locations changed over time, the abandoned older homes of the wealthy were converted into flats or apartments for the less prosperous, as in ancient Greek and Roman cities.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{10}\) McKay, pp86-7; Maria Papaioannou, ‘The Roman Domus in the Greek World’ Building Communities conference, April 2001 (http://www.cf.ac.uk/hisar/conferences/oikos/index.html).


\(^{12}\) Sutcliffe, pp6-7.
Chapter 1: The flat tradition
The flat in history

The next great wave of European multiple-occupancy residential construction accompanied the onset of industrial urbanisation in the late eighteenth century. The need to accommodate large influxes of workers pouring into the new industrial centres produced a sudden spate of apartment and tenement house construction, and subdivision of older middle-class housing into apartments. Sutcliffe argues that the pre-existing tradition of apartment living in European cities, as much as the competition for land, created the conditions for the multiplicity of flats and tenements constructed during the early industrial era. By the nineteenth century, European urban dwellers had so adapted family, social and economic life to flat-living that when suburban expansion eventuated, it did so in the form of high-density flats rather than suburban cottages.¹³

As the primary cultural influence in the settlement of Australia from 1788, Britain’s historical experience of multiple-occupancy dwelling was significant in shaping Australian attitudes to the residential flat. Although England in particular developed a much stronger tradition of detached or semi-detached urban housing than in European cities, industrial era tenements were certainly part of Britain’s urban environments.

In the 1500s the Scots were the first in Britain to experience tenement living, when rising urban populations and diminishing residential land forced Scotland’s medieval fortified towns literally to grow upwards. In Edinburgh, for example, two- and three-storeyed timber houses were replaced with stone tenement buildings for the affluent, of up to seven or eight storeys. One remarkable building stood at thirteen storeys.¹⁴

Scottish working-class tenements appeared with the onset of the industrial revolution in the 1780s, when the towns of western Scotland were subject to a rapid influx of workers from the highlands, the islands and Ireland. Developers found the construction of tenements more profitable than the back-to-back houses being erected to cater for a similar rural influx into English industrial towns and cities, largely due to the Scottish feu duty on land sales (a fee, fixed in perpetuity, paid annually by the purchaser to the vendor), and the existence of legislation enabling developers to sell individual tenements.¹⁵

¹³ Sutcliffe, p9
¹⁵ Sutcliffe, pp213-4.
Scottish tenement buildings of the late eighteenth century adjoined roads and had open space at the rear, known as ‘back greens’, providing tenants with fresh air and sunlight. In the early nineteenth century, population increases resulted in these spaces being taken up for further tenement construction, which became known as ‘backjams’ or ‘backlands’. Usually of four storeys in height and often occupying the length of a street, these notorious slums had densities in excess of 1,000 persons per acre. They were built to a standard plan, with access from the street via dark, narrow passages leading to spiral staircases at the rear, which in turn opened into a T-shaped corridor on each floor. Most floors contained eight small, dark, poorly ventilated dwellings off each corridor - four two-roomed and four with one room. There were no kitchens or bathrooms; shared sinks and water closets were located off the stair landings.¹⁶

The English had little familiarity with purpose-built tenements and flats until the 1840s. When industrialisation created a massive drift to the towns and cities in the late eighteenth century, the response was to construct back-to-back rows of semi-detached houses rather than flats. This was due partly to the lack of freehold land in many English cities and partly to the dearth of English statute, case law and local by-laws relating to flats, especially a lack of legislation permitting separate ownership of individual floors of a house. The back-to-back houses tended to be three-storeyed with a cellar, but, like the tenements of Scotland, were often overcrowded, with individual houses shared by more than one family. By 1840 Liverpool, for example, was the most overcrowded city in England, with an estimated 32,000 people residing in cellars.¹⁷

By the 1840s the appalling living conditions and high mortality rates in the overcrowded back-to-back English houses, and in older inner-city residences converted into multiple-occupancy dwellings, prompted English social reformers to call for housing reform at a national level. They sought a ban on back-to-back housing and called for the construction of model housing in the form of purpose-designed, purpose-built working-class flats and tenements. Legislation was introduced to govern construction, but as most tenements were built by private enterprise or model housing companies

¹⁶ Sutcliffe, pp213-4.
determined to make a profit, health and sanitation provisions were reduced to the barest minimum required under law.\textsuperscript{18}

Despite the overwhelming English national preference for individual houses (detached or semi-detached) and publicly expressed antipathy to ‘French flats’ as a way of life, British entrepreneurs of the 1850s and 1860s began to construct purpose-designed flats in London for the affluent. They were the equivalent of upper-class town houses, with servants’ quarters. Analysing these early attempts at English upper-class flat construction, J.N. Tarn argues that this new form of residential accommodation was accepted for the convenience and fashionable novelty value and because the English upper classes were less conscious than the working classes of the social status conferred by the single house.\textsuperscript{19} These early upper-class flats acquired a cultural association with modernity and cosmopolitanism that was revived and exploited during the interwar period of the twentieth century to popularise middle-class English flats.

Social historian John Burnett considers that there were no middle-class flats in any significant numbers in England prior to the late nineteenth century. Flat construction was limited largely to London, and targeted toward single occupants (bachelor flats) or childless middle-class families.\textsuperscript{20} There is evidence, however, that from the 1870s purpose-built middle-class flats were being erected in London in considerable numbers. One builder alone constructed 10 large blocks during the 1870s, each containing 44 flats, ranging from five to twelve rooms. Many of the early middle-class flat buildings were poorly designed, particularly the servants’ quarters, which were often extremely cramped and lacking in light and ventilation. However, these flats were popular with the middle classes, who could economise in the number of domestic servants employed.\textsuperscript{21}

By the turn of the century flats were being abandoned by the English middle classes in preference for the new garden suburbs – an extension of the garden city movement, which was proving the principal focus of early-twentieth-century British town planning. Not until the interwar years was the British middle-class flat revived.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Refer to Sutcliffe, pp14-15 and Taylor, 1974.
\textsuperscript{21} Burnett, p210; Tarn, pp24-5, 35.
\textsuperscript{22} Tarn, pp38-9.
Of all the European multiple-occupancy dwelling traditions of the industrial era, the ‘French flat’, originating in Paris, ultimately proved the most cosmopolitan, its influence extending well beyond its national borders. Designed as accommodation for the upper and middle classes, these fashionable domiciles became popular throughout the Western world in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The rise of the nation-state in France during the seventeenth century created the pre-conditions necessary for the French to accept flats as a mode of living. At this period the apartment became a respectable form of domicile for the French aristocracy, who congregated en masse in the great palaces of the French court (Luxembourg, Tuileries, Versailles and Louvre), much as their counterparts in ancient cities had done. By 1710, at the height of the French Empire, Versailles accommodated approximately 10,000 people in 226 dwellings and about 450 single rooms. Imitating the Royal Court, the French aristocracy constructed Parisian mansions as miniature palaces, or hotels particuliers. A typical hotel particulier comprised a series of chambers and antechambers opening into each other and arranged over several floors and around a central courtyard, accommodating an extended family, guests, visitors and servants in discrete apartments. Rooms on the lower floor were large and elaborately detailed; those on the floors above became progressively smaller and less ornately decorated the further one had to climb the stairs, culminating in servants’ quarters on the upper floor.23

When abandoned by the aristocracy and middle classes from the late 1700s, these buildings were divided into tenements for the less affluent. The conversions were notorious – formerly large rooms divided into tiny apartments, additional levels inserted, and no provision for ventilation, light, water or sanitation – creating some of the worst slums in Europe:

Ceilings as low as 1.7 to 2 meters could be found, and a typical room might be 1.5 meters wide and 2 meters long. Haphazard staircases, often no more than ladders, together with dark, labyrinthian passages, would provide access throughout the structure. Attics, cellars, and stables might be converted to housing, while courtyards would be built over and occupied by commercial workshops and sheds. Heat was usually lacking, and water often available only in the street or courtyard. Sanitation was virtually nonexistent.24

23 Hawes, p22.
During Baron Haussmann’s reconstruction of central Paris in the 1860s and 1870s the seventeenth-century hotels particuliers were reinvented as purpose-designed, middle-class apartment buildings known as immeubles or maisons de rapport – and in Britain and the United States as ‘French flats’. These substantial structures of six or seven storeys lined the new wide boulevards of Paris in the beaux quartiers. Carriageways provided access from the streets to inner courtyards with stables and gardens. Like the old hotels particuliers, the maisons de rapport accommodated in their design the hierarchy of social status: large entrance foyer and middle-class apartments of six or seven rooms on the ground or premier étage; smaller apartments of three to five rooms on the floors above; and maids’ rooms under the roof. Sometimes the better-lit rooms under the roof were let as artists’ studios.\(^{25}\)

Parisian apartments provided the model for the earliest American flats.\(^{26}\) Given the symbolic attraction of North America as a land free of old-world social and cultural constructs, it is paradoxical that during the second half of the nineteenth century the United States evolved a strong tradition of urban multiple-dwelling buildings – and not just to accommodate the working classes. The construction of vast numbers of poorly designed working-class tenements in American east-coast cities at this period was barely realised overseas, obscured by American promotion of the middle-class flat or apartment as a modern and attractive alternative to the detached dwelling. Images of New York slums filled with European immigrants in overcrowded and unsanitary tenement buildings were swept aside by a vision of middle- and upper-class apartment-living exported through magazines, newspapers and later film.

\(^{25}\) Evenson, pp200-1; Hawes, pp22, 24.

\(^{26}\) In the early 1920s, the National Association of Real Estate Boards in the United States undertook research into the origins of the apartment house in America, identifying New Orleans as home to some of the earliest American apartments. Prior to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, New Orleans had been controlled by the French briefly, and before that, the Spanish, and was one of the United States’ most cosmopolitan cities. From at least the 1810s, New Orleans merchants were erecting apartments for two or more families over shops or business premises, with the first large-scale apartment development erected in 1849-51. Modelled on Parisian apartments, the Pontalba Buildings comprise two long rows of 16 three-storeyed ‘houses’ with attics, built on two opposite sides of an open city square. Each house contained shops at street level and apartments above, the latter accessed via private entrances opening directly off the street onto narrow passages, which led via curving stairs to the apartments on the upper floors. (Sunday Mail, 7 September 1924, p24; Sally Reeves, ‘Madame Pontalba’s Buildings’, at www.frenchquarter.com/sightseeing/PontaBaBuildings.php.)
From the 1870s through to 1940 the great cities of the eastern United States (high-rise products of American capitalism) generated an image of modern living that was synonymous with dwelling in apartments. New York, described by Peter Hall as the ‘Apotheosis of the Modern’, had become the world’s greatest apartment city by 1900, with approximately 90 per cent of the population of the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx (which together had comprised New York City until 1898) residing in multiple-occupancy dwellings. In 1929, 98 per cent of New Yorkers resided in flats and apartments.\(^\text{27}\)

Andrew Alpern identified the importation of the ‘French flats’ model to New York in the late 1860s as significant in re-shaping social attitudes toward multiple-occupancy dwelling:

> It has only been since 1869 that those who consider themselves above the laboring classes have been willing to make their homes under shared roofs. Prior to that time it would have been unthinkable for a family of even modest social aspirations to live in anything but a private dwelling, however humble such a house might be.\(^\text{28}\)

Elizabeth Hawes, writing on the transformation of middle- and upper-class New Yorkers from suburbanites to apartment-dwellers in the period 1869-1930, similarly acknowledged the influence on the United States of the French preference for apartment-living. However, she associates New York’s adoption of apartment living with more than just economic factors such as a speculative building boom in the 1870s, or with the importation of the French flats model, arguing that the shift would not have been possible without fundamental social change:

> To many observers, the restlessness and rootlessness of city people indicated a readiness for change. The apartment house was perceived as a possible solution to their ills. Although it was an old European way of life, many New Yorkers saw it as a vision of the future. It was in fact a form of city planning based on a concept of New York larger than a series of separate households, of its urban life more interlocking than isolating.\(^\text{29}\)

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\(^{27}\) Peter Hall cited in Sutcliffe, p10; Hawes, pxiii.  
\(^{28}\) Alpern, p1.  
The first New York apartment house or ‘French flats’ was the Stuyvesant Building, a five-storeyed walk-up constructed in 1869 for Rutherford Stuyvesant. It was designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt, the first American to study at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The first four floors consisted of self-contained flats or apartments, each with its own bathroom and kitchen. The fifth floor was reserved for artists’ studios (as in the Parisian fashion). The block attracted principally childless young couples, widows and artists. (Alpern, p1; Hawes, pp5-8, 15.)  
\(^{29}\) Hawes, p30.
Contemporary trends

Throughout the interwar period the provision of sufficient and appropriate housing to accommodate the urban working classes in Australia’s rapidly rising city populations was a matter of national concern. Politicians, planners, architects and social reformers debated slum clearance, the nature of worker housing – should the emphasis be on detached cottages or on blocks of flats? – and to what extent governments should be involved in the provision of housing.

Identical concerns were occupying governments, social reformers and professionals overseas, where interwar experiments in housing urban proletariats ranged from the high-rise tenement blocks of European cities to the semi-detached houses of Britain. These urban housing schemes, along with developments in middle-class flat and apartment construction in Britain and the United States, provided the principal contemporary influences on Australian decisions about housing in general and multiple-occupancy dwellings in particular during the 1920s and 1930s.30

The interwar revival in European, British and North American apartment construction occurred precisely at the time when Australian cities were experiencing rapid population increase, rising inner-city and inner-suburban land values, and a drift of workers from domestic service to the manufacturing and retail sectors. Australian cities and middle-class lifestyles were under pressure, and it was inevitable that overseas solutions to the problem of housing rising urban populations should be studied – to be emulated or rejected, depending on their resonance with Australian values and ideologies:

Flats versus cottages is perhaps the issue above all others about which there is most controversy at the present time; and it is upon such an issue also that one may perhaps hope to learn most from the experience and views of others in different countries. Yet, again, it is not a question upon which one can expect to obtain a dogmatic answer. All one can do is to take stock of what has been done in various countries; what is now being done, and what is the present trend of opinion on the subject.31

30 Refer to Elizabeth Denby, Europe Re-housed, 2nd edition, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944 for a review of European approaches to the housing of urban working classes in the interwar period. In Australia, local interwar journals such as Building regularly published articles on the latest European housing schemes and on British flat developments.
31 ‘Housing and Slum Areas. Some Points for Consideration’ in Building, 12 September 1935, p22.
Chapter 1: The flat tradition
Contemporary trends

**Continental tenements**

In the wake of the Great War of 1914-1918, providing homes for the urban masses become a reconstruction priority for European nations. In Continental Europe, great experiments were being made in the provision of worker housing, much of this in the form of high-rise flats and tenements. In Britain, municipalities concentrated on inner-city slum clearance programs and the provision of low-rise municipal flats.

Solutions to the problem of housing Europe’s post-war urban populations were showcased at the international conference on garden cities and town planning held in Paris early in 1923.32 Here delegates had the opportunity of inspecting at first-hand two Parisian housing models: a number of new ‘garden villages’ on the outskirts of the city; and several newly-erected, large-scale blocks of inner-city working-class tenements. The latter replaced earlier and much less sanitary buildings, and were largely the work of local government. Designed to a budget and to accommodate families of four or more children, the municipal blocks were ill-equipped, with no water supply to the individual tenements, and only two wash sinks and two water closets per floor to serve four families. They were little more than embryonic slums.

The largest tenement complex, however, was the impressive Rothschild Foundation tenements in the Rue Championnet – a privately-funded, high-rise village of massive scale. Constructed as a model tenement development and symbolising the latest in European thinking on high-rise apartment living for the working classes, the complex provided for workers’ needs from infancy to death, and was considerably better designed and equipped than the municipal blocks. The architecture was impressive, the scale substantial, the ventilation well planned, staircases and circulation patterns ‘ample’, and the facilities of a high quality. These included communal baths, fully equipped modern laundries, crèche and kindergarten, reading and workrooms for older children’s activities, and even a morgue. Some suites included workshops to accommodate cottage industries. Rent controls and subsidies operated, but it was clear that a development of this scale would not be profitable if constructed by private enterprise.

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32 A report of this conference appeared in *Building*, 12 April 1923, p66.
French municipalities continued to construct large-scale working-class tenement complexes throughout the interwar period. These became increasingly better serviced and more sophisticated, functioning as small towns. One of the largest, erected at Lyons in the mid-1930s, contained an Hotel de Ville, a Palais du Travail (providing a social and recreational focus for the community), a central heating and lighting station, 6 residential blocks containing 1500 flats of different sizes, a stadium, an outdoor swimming pool, and several schools. The complex included two 19-storeyed residential tower blocks.33

Similar multiple-occupancy housing developments were being experimented with throughout continental Europe during the 1920s and 1930s. Holland, for example, was one of the forerunners in the construction of modern European municipal and state working-class flats and tenements, with Amsterdam claiming in 1926 that every worker would be re-housed within ten years. The Dutch developments were on a substantial scale, averaging five or six floors in height and designed in the latest modern architectural styles, drawing from the work of de Clerk in Holland and the French exponent of functionalism, Le Corbusier. As in the Rothschild Foundation complex in Paris, most of these large blocks of municipal tenements were designed to function as self-contained communities, with provision for retail shops, laundry, crèche and other communal facilities.34

In the 1920s Austria erected five- or six-storey blocks of workers’ tenements on a massive scale. Like the Dutch, the Austrian designers chose a functionalist style reflective of the modern machine age, but the interiors were often poorly designed and serviced. A massive, six-storeyed, mid-1920s complex in Vienna comprised mainly three-roomed tenements (living area, bedroom and kitchen) with a water closet but no bathroom and no elevator access. Critiquing the design, the editor of Building illustrated an entrenched Australian antipathy to this type of multi-occupancy dwelling:

Not many Australians, enjoying the privileges of a house to themselves with four feet of earth between their home and the dividing fence of the neighbour and 15 feet of grass plot or garden in the front of the house, would care to live herded together like so many sheep in pens, such as the Municipality of Vienna provides for its people.35

34 Building, 12 February 1926, p63 and 12 May 1926, p149; Brisbane Courier, 21 May 1929, p11.
35 Building, 12 November 1927, p83.
By the early 1930s Austria’s designers of large blocks of worker tenements were incorporating lavish green spaces into their schemes, to balance the scale and density of the residential blocks. By far the largest of the Viennese municipal tenement complexes, the Karl-Marx-Hof designed by Oberbaurat Karl Ehn, was completed in the mid-1930s. It occupied a total ground area of 156,027 square metres with a principal street frontage a kilometre in length, and bridged four cross-streets. The footprint of the building occupied less than 25 percent of the site, with the remainder taken up by garden courts, children’s playgrounds, passages and roads. Designed as a square around an open space, the complex accommodated 5,000 persons in nearly 100 one-room tenements and 1,300 tenements varying in size from one room and kitchen to five rooms and kitchen. For tenant convenience, 25 shops, 2 laundries, 2 bathhouses, a children’s dental clinic, a library and a post office were incorporated into the design.36

In the 1920s and early 1930s Germany, the recognised home of modern architecture, experimented with the construction of functionalist-styled, multi-storeyed, multiple-occupancy conglomerates to house its urban proletariats. Following Adolf Hitler’s appointment as Chancellor in 1933 a fundamental shift in building design and urban planning took place. Legislation passed in 1934 gave the Ministry for Labour the control of the development of colonies of small holdings, and approval rights over large constructions in cities. Recognising that functionalism had become an international style, Hitler banned its use in Germany, decreeing that future buildings should be designed in more traditional German style. The ‘new tradition’ was applied particularly to residential form and design.37 H.A.N. Brockman, writing in 1936 for the British journal *The National Builder* on German building policy, identified the principal focus of the new policies as the encouragement of residential construction in medium-sized and small towns, and discouragement of further construction in the cities, reversing the post-war trend for multiple-occupancy dwelling:

... Germany is determined to become self-supporting, and is therefore doing all she can, from every point of view, to increase work, and not to cut it down by such sociological expedients as the communal system of flats. ...38

37 Building, 13 April 1931, p107; ‘German Architecture. Factors Influencing Its Development’ in Building, 12 February 1936, pp33, 35.
38 H.A.N. Brockman, c1936 quoted in Building, 12 February 1936, p35.
Illustrations of large-scale tenement developments in European cities such as Amsterdam and Vienna were reported regularly in Australian trade journals and local newspapers, but rarely were they advocated as an alternative to Australia’s detached housing. The sheer modernity of the architectural style seemed as much a stumbling block to the acceptance of large-scale tenement or flat buildings as the traditional Anglo-Australian distrust of multi-occupancy dwellings. The editors of the influential Sydney publication Building denigrated the new streamlined architecture as ‘frightful’, ‘drab’, ‘monotonous’ and ‘packing case architecture’ more suitable for factories than residential apartments. Le Corbusier was described as ‘the French poseur’. 39

The conservatism of architectural thinking in Australia was understandable. Functionalist architecture had emerged from within large, overcrowded, industrial European cities, which had little in common with sun-drenched, clean-air, suburbanised Australian cities of the 1920s. To Australians, the scale and design of functionalist-inspired tenements was soul-destroying:

People could not help but feel poverty stricken in ideas, and all aspirations would be suppressed, hope denied and the heart sickened in environs such as these. 40

**North American skyscrapers**

The late-nineteenth-century evolution of American multiple-occupancy dwellings from ‘French flats’ to luxury high-rise apartment buildings would not have been possible without the invention of the electric passenger elevator in the 1880s. 41 Arguably, this invention generated the most significant shift in flat-living and flat design since the Roman appartimenta. Ease of access to all floors facilitated the construction of high-rise residential buildings and shifted the location of upper- and middle-class flats from the traditional piano nobile (principal storey) just above street level to the upper levels and pent-house. It also produced the American interwar apartment skyscraper.

In Manhattan alone, over 4,000 apartment houses were erected between 1902 and 1910, with many hundreds of these purpose-designed for the upper and upper-middle classes. 42 Apartment blocks for the affluent were elaborate, often palatial, high-rise

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40 *Building*, 12 October 1928, p149.


42 Hawes, p153.
buildings of up to 12-14 storeys. Some offered duplex (two-storeyed) and triplex (three-storeyed) apartments, and suites of up to 14 rooms occupying an entire floor (simplexes). Prior to the depression of the early 1930s, these blocks became more and more lavish, culminating in the luxurious River House (1930), which was designed with a number of large duplexes, and a triplex with a double-height living room. In the wake of the Wall Street stock market crash of 1929 the demand for palatial suites evaporated and apartment layouts became more compact and functional, but the high-rise blocks grew into towers and vast complexes. Amongst the most famous of these were New York’s London Terrace (a complex of 14 buildings accommodating 1700 suites and occupying an entire block square, completed in 1930) and The Majestic (1930) with its tall towers, offering a range of apartment sizes.43

From the United States, Australians gained an impression of the grand or luxury flat in its most seductive form. The image was illusory and no Australian urban centre could afford to imitate the great high-rise apartment buildings of New York city. Despite this reality, the early-twentieth-century association of American apartment houses with modernity and increased living standards did much to counteract Australian antipathy toward living in flats.

**British interwar flats**

Dominating British thinking and policies on town planning during the 1920s was the desire to create garden dormitory suburbs for the working classes. Between 1840 and 1914 many of the inner-urban, back-to-back slum houses of England’s industrial cities were replaced by tenement buildings, but after the Great War of 1914-1918 a series of Housing Acts made provision for the establishment of planned, low-density, working-class dormitory suburbs. The outcome was rarely as successful as the establishment of earlier British middle-class garden suburbs. Attempts to decentralise the English working classes were undermined by the strength of working-class social and familial ties to an inner-city lifestyle, and the inability of workers to cope with extended travel times and costs. In the 1930s many local authorities recognised the failure of the dormitory suburbs, turning instead to the demolition of older inner-city working-class houses, which were then replaced with municipal-owned and constructed flats.44

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43 Refer to Alpern, 1975 for further examples of New York apartments for the affluent.
44 Sutcliffe, p16.

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*Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.*

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
Many of the concerns expressed about English flats in the interwar period were translated to the Brisbane experience, as were the solutions proposed. For example, the British architect Henry Ingham Ashworth, in his influential 1936 work on the design and equipping of English flats, did more than simply summarise the advantages and disadvantages of living in flats. In promoting flat construction, Ashworth emphasised the need to consider the ethics of good planning, sound construction and social responsibility in all new flat developments. The work illustrated the moral debates of the era and reflected contemporary British Labor party thinking and policy.\textsuperscript{45}

The foreward to the publication was written by Arthur Greenwood, a prominent British Labour politician who, during his term as Minister for Health between 1929 and 1931, had introduced the \textit{Housing Act 1930}. In addition to providing a subsidy for rehousing urban workers in suburban cottages, the Act provided subsidies for rehousing schemes in the form of flat dwellings where high land prices prohibited the construction of cottages. Citing the ‘amazing development’ in flat construction in England since the end of the Great War, particularly in London, Greenwood argued that many people already found that flats offered a convenient way of life and that it was ‘the duty of the State, of local authorities, and of the building industry’ to satisfy this new demand for flats.\textsuperscript{46}

Writing in 1938 on contemporary European approaches to the problem of housing large proletariat populations, and comparing these to solutions adopted in Britain, influential British housing consultant and social reformer, Elizabeth Denby, argued that ‘In Britain ‘flat-life’ is interpreted at its crudest and lowest level.’\textsuperscript{47} She considered that the low-rental working-class tenements erected in England in the two decades following the Great War were poorly planned, with no provision for balconies, ground-floor storage spaces, gardens, children’s playgrounds, or community facilities such as meeting rooms and workshops. Denby had made an extensive study of the large-scale, model tenement developments erected in continental Europe (Sweden, Holland, Austria, Germany, France and Italy) between 1918 and 1936, in terms of design, form,
cost of construction and financing models. She concluded that British housing schemes by comparison were ‘surprisingly extravagant’ in terms of funds expended, yet failed to provide adequate housing or to plan for that sense of community that had been a hallmark of traditional English residential life.48

Denby’s work highlighted the failure of British working-class flat developments prior to World War Two, and co-incidentally illustrated precisely why this model of working-class housing was not transplanted to Australian urban centres. Equally, Denby argued that it was possible to design well for compact living in British cities despite the pervasive ‘English cottage and garden tradition’ and the failure of earlier flat developments, pointing to the achievements in Continental Europe.

Publications such as Ashworth (1936) and Denby (1938) informed and helped to allay the concerns about flat-living held by Australian architects and social reformers, who imported and readily adopted the concept that flats would not become slums if properly designed and constructed.

Furthermore, the revival of British inner-city working-class flat construction corresponded with a renewed attempt to encourage the middle classes into flat-living in the 1920s and 1930s. By association, these blocks of middle-class flats:

... removed some of the stigma of the older working-class tenements and made multi-storey living fashionable at precisely the time when suburban sprawl was taking some of the shine off the suburban ideal and reinforcing demands for preservation of the countryside.49

The move to reinvent the middle-class flat in England occurred simultaneously with the move to introduce purpose-designed blocks of flats in Brisbane during the interwar period. Images of state-of-the-art London flats appeared regularly in the pages of Australian trade journals such as Building, which promoted the construction of well-designed, purpose-built blocks of flats in Australian cities. From England came a more accessible version of flat-living – smaller scale and often domestic in form – than from either continental Europe or the United States.

48 Refer to Denby, pp246-78.
49 Sutcliffe, pp16-17.
Conclusion

Despite the longevity of the tradition of multiple-occupancy dwelling, there is no evidence to suggest that the form of apartments or flats of the middle ages was modelled on those of the ancient world, or that the modern world looked to the work of medieval or Roman builders for inspiration when erecting high-rise apartment blocks. Cultural influences undoubtedly permeated, but until the internationalism of the late-imperial/industrial/mass-media age, multiple-occupancy dwellings as a building type came into being as a fairly direct response to the demands of specific times, places, cultures and classes.

The most startling aspect of flat, tenement and apartment living in Western societies has been the consistency and commonality of interests displayed across more than two millennia and numerous cultures, in the nature and form of flat developments and the motives for their construction. Threaded through the history of periods of significant-scale flat construction in Western urban societies is a repetitive pattern of characteristics, including the following:

- the association of tenement- and flat-living with rapid population increase;
- the association of tenement- and flat-living with social and/or economic change;
- the conversion of larger older residences into multiple-occupancy dwellings as fashionable residential districts shift within urban centres;
- the association of tenements with overcrowded and insanitary living conditions;
- the gaining of profits at the expense of good construction and design, resulting in poorly constructed, inconvenient and unhealthy buildings;
- attempts by municipal and/or state authorities to control tenement and flat development;
- a clear distinction between the size, quality and facilities of flats designed for the upper and middle-classes and those constructed for artisan or working classes; and
- the association of upper- and middle-class flat-living with high-fashion and cosmopolitanism, which by the twentieth century had been translated into ‘modernity’.
Chapter 1: The flat tradition

Conclusion

As will be demonstrated in this thesis, all of the above characteristics and concerns regarding multiple-occupancy dwellings emerged and were debated in interwar Brisbane, where contemporaries were drawing inspiration for, or eschewing, or ameliorating, modern ideas about flat-dwelling and residential flat buildings that were being developed in Continental Europe, Britain and North America.

In post-1918 Europe, continental governments were experimenting with the construction of large-scale, high-rise urban villages to accommodate burgeoning proletariats harbouring expectations of improved living standards compatible with the modern machine age. To Australian observers, these housing schemes generated conflicting messages about multiple-occupancy dwellings. While the ultra-modern architectural style was emulative, the form was not. Construction costs necessitated that the apartments within these vast residential complexes were extremely modest in size and more akin to tenements than flats in the limited private facilities provided. Interwar Australia (and Queensland in particular) seemed unable to accept either the modern architecture or the extremely compact living these new buildings generated.

Interwar Australians similarly rejected the municipal slum clearance programs that European municipalities employed in order to construct their modern high-rise tenements. After years of discussion and debate, attempts were made in the late 1930s to clear inner-city slums in Paddington and Erskineville in Sydney and replace them with working-class flat and tenement complexes, but despite much debate, slum clearance was not taken up to any extent in the other Australian metropolitan areas.  

On the other hand, in the promotion of English middle-class flats and American luxury apartments as ‘modern living’, Australia finally found cultural inspiration for the construction of its own purpose-designed, purpose-built blocks of flats.

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50 In April 1937 the New South Wales government announced that it would allocate £2,000,000 to housing improvement, including £500,000 to be spent in the remainder of the financial year on the state’s first slum clearance and rehousing, in Paddington, Sydney. By September 1937, the New South Wales government had also released plans of its rehousing scheme for Erskineville in Sydney, showing a number of blocks of working-class flats (Courier-Mail, 6 April 1937, p18; Building, 24 September 1937, pp30-3).
Housing shortage
Chapter 2: Housing shortage

Brisbane in 1920 was a highly suburbanised city, which offered its inhabitants limited experience of multiple-occupancy dwellings. Converting houses into flats was becoming a common practice, but no one had yet constructed a purpose-built blocks of flats in the metropolitan area. However, by the early 1930s flats (both house conversions and purpose-built blocks) had become an accepted form of residential accommodation in many areas of the city, and during the second half of the 1930s were constructed in ever-increasing numbers. Given the abundance of land available for the suburban dream – traditionally the preferred mode of residential accommodation in Australia – what was the impetus for the construction of multiple-occupancy dwellings in Brisbane during the interwar period?

A sustained housing shortage was the most conspicuous of the conditions conducive to the emergence of flats in Brisbane. By 1920 there was general community agreement that Brisbane, in common with many cities world-wide, was facing a chronic if not acute housing shortage, particularly in rental housing. Rapid population increase, a significant fall in home building during the Great War of 1914-1918, sustained high costs of labour and materials in the aftermath of the war, post-war community expectations that governments would deliver a better standard of living, and the impact of Queensland’s Fair Rents Act of 1920, combined to culminate in this global urban phenomenon being experienced in Brisbane.

The conundrum in this housing shortage was that although the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area had risen by 50.58 per cent between 1911 and 1921, the number of private dwellings (houses, flats and tenements) had increased by 63 per cent (from 26,645 to 43,447), suggesting that new home construction was more than keeping pace with population growth. Yet contemporary reports regularly identified a chronic housing shortage in Brisbane. At the time of the 1921 census, there were 1,716 unoccupied houses in the Brisbane metropolitan area (this figure did not include houses under construction), or 3.76 per cent of all metropolitan private dwellings. Temporarily unoccupied houses were included in this figure, but so too were rental houses no longer considered desirable habitation by contemporary standards.

The housing shortage was more than a statistical lack of detached residences; it was the lack of modern housing that lay at the heart of the matter. Changing socio-cultural expectations regarding family sizes, housing standards, and home ownership produced an increased demand for the modern detached suburban cottage that no amount of home-building during the interwar period appeared to satisfy. When supply could not be met, the initial solution was to convert redundant former single-family homes into rental flats and tenements.

This chapter examines the key demographic, economic, social and political trends affecting the supply of housing in the Brisbane metropolitan area in the period immediately prior to, and during, the interwar years. Responses to this shortage are discussed in subsequent chapters.
Population increase

The greatest single contributing factor to Brisbane's interwar housing shortage was a sustained population increase, which commenced in the late nineteenth century and intensified during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. From a total of 26,382 in 1871 the metropolitan population had risen to 253,215 when Greater Brisbane was formed in 1925, and had more than doubled between 1901 and 1925.3

As the administrative and political centre, commercial hub and principal port of an establishing and developing colony, Brisbane had attracted extraordinary population growth during the immigration boom of the 1880s. Between 1881 and 1891 the population of Queensland increased by 84.4 per cent and that of the Brisbane metropolitan area by 174.1 per cent (from 37,053 to 101,554 persons). By 1891 Queensland had the highest proportion of overseas-born of any Australian colony. Brisbane's immigrant influx was drawn principally from British stock, and contained a high proportion of young adults. By 1891, the median age of the Brisbane population (male and female) was 21.6 years, and the proportion aged less than 40 years was 82.84,4 establishing the potential for substantial natural increase.

Overseas immigration to Queensland was severely curtailed during the turbulent strike- and depression-ridden years of the 1890s,5 but natural increase ensured a growth rate of 17.6 per cent between 1891 and 1901. At Australian federation in 1901, the Brisbane metropolitan area had a population of 119,428, a median age of 22.7 years, and a still high 78.78 per cent of the population aged less than 40 years.6


Under the provisions of the City of Brisbane Act 1924 the City of Brisbane and 19 surrounding metropolitan local government areas (or parts of) were amalgamated under the one Greater Brisbane council, which was elected on 21 February 1925. Greater Brisbane, with an area of approximately 375 square miles and a population of approximately 240,000, came into existence from 1 October 1925 (refer to Greenwood and Laverty, 1959, Chapters 8 and 10).


Lawson accepted Paul Crook’s figures for the 1881 area and population of Brisbane, prior to the 1880s suburban expansion of the Brisbane metropolitan area (see DP Crook ‘Aspects of Brisbane Society in the Eighteen-Eighties’, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland, BA Thesis, 1958, p5).

5 Assisted immigration was suspended by the Queensland government in March 1892, and was not resumed until 1899. Immigrants to Queensland in the period 1891-1901 numbered 9,696 assisted (less than the average for one year during the 1880s) and 5,331 non-assisted, making a total of 15,027 (refer to Lawson, p20).

Despite a revival in the economy during the first decade of the twentieth century, population increase in the Brisbane metropolitan area was marginally less than that of the 1890s, at 16.8 per cent, or 20,052 persons. For two decades the rate of Brisbane’s population growth had more or less stabilised. By 1911 the Brisbane metropolitan area, with an area of 199,369 acres and a population of 139,480, contained 23 per cent of the total Queensland population – a proportion which, with the exception of Hobart, was substantially lower than the other Australian capital cities. Yet Brisbane was about to experience a significant expansion of its population. While proportionally the increase was not nearly as dramatic as during the immigration years of the 1880s, numerically the growth was substantial.

In 1911 Australia was, literally, a young nation. The Brisbane metropolitan area exemplified a national trend with approximately 75 per cent of the population aged less than 40 years, and the mean age of residents (male and female) at 27.15 years. Brisbane’s population was aging when compared with the 1891 mean age of 21.6 years, but close to 45 per cent of the population was still comfortably within the principal child rearing years (ages 15-39). These statistics were comparable with all other Australian capital cities (refer to Table 2.1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan area</th>
<th>0-14</th>
<th>15-39</th>
<th>less than 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>28.44</td>
<td>45.89</td>
<td>74.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>27.39</td>
<td>44.20</td>
<td>71.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>30.49</td>
<td>44.87</td>
<td>75.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>44.03</td>
<td>73.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>33.31</td>
<td>42.75</td>
<td>76.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>29.90</td>
<td>42.64</td>
<td>72.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australian metropolitan average</strong></td>
<td><strong>28.67</strong></td>
<td><strong>44.73</strong></td>
<td><strong>73.40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 In April 1911 the percentage of each state population resident in the metropolitan area was: Adelaide (46.42), Melbourne (44.77); Sydney (38.23); Perth (37.85); Brisbane (23.02); and Hobart (20.89) (Census 3 April 1911, Vol.1, p112).
The potential for rapid population growth in Brisbane, evident in the 1911 census statistics, had become a reality by 1921. The Queensland population had increased by 25 per cent and the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area had risen dramatically by 50.6 per cent to 209,946 persons, or 28 per cent of the Queensland population. In part the rapid increase in the Brisbane metropolitan population during the 1910s reflected a national trend. The populations of all Australian metropolitan areas rose significantly during the decade 1911-1921, despite the impact of war, but Brisbane experienced the greatest proportional increase (refer to Table 2.2 below).

Table 2.2 Percentage of population increase in each Australian metropolitan area between 1911 and 1921.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan Area</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Melbourne</th>
<th>Brisbane</th>
<th>Adelaide</th>
<th>Perth</th>
<th>Hobart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons in 1911</td>
<td>629,503</td>
<td>588,971</td>
<td>139,480</td>
<td>189,646</td>
<td>106,792</td>
<td>39,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons in 1921</td>
<td>899,099</td>
<td>766,506</td>
<td>210,032</td>
<td>255,481</td>
<td>154,866</td>
<td>52,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage increase</td>
<td>42.83</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>50.58</td>
<td>34.71</td>
<td>45.02</td>
<td>31.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 1922 and 1929 the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area increased at a greater rate than the overall Queensland population, rising from 217,714 persons in 1921 to 284,758 in 1929, an increase of 30.79 per cent. In 1925, contemporary analysts predicted that population increase would be sustained at a rate of 10,000 per annum for the next decade. The census of 1933 (postponed in 1931 due to the effects of the global economic depression) revealed that although the rate of increase was slower than in the period 1911-1921, due to the impact of the depression, the population of metropolitan Brisbane had continued to rise substantially from 209,946 in 1921 to 299,748 in 1933, an increase of 89,802 or 42.78 per cent.  

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10 Census 4 April 1921, Census Bulletin No.2, p3.  
In 1911 the Brisbane metropolitan area recorded a natural increase rate of 15.14 per 1,000 of population (2,140 in a population of 141,342), which by 1921 had risen to 17.7 per 1,000 (3,862 in a population of 217,714), before falling to 10.83 per 1,000 (2,858 in a population of 264,025) in 1927.\textsuperscript{12}

Natural increase alone clearly was not the sole cause of sustained, rapid population growth in Brisbane during the 1910s and 1920s; nor could this growth be accounted for by interstate and international immigration, which was targeted at rural areas. What must be considered is the impact of ‘urban drift’ (an American term that became 
\textit{vogue} in Brisbane in the interwar period).

Unlike the massive population shifts from rural hamlets to industrial centres occurring in Europe from the late eighteenth century, Queensland’s early-twentieth-century urban drift was not driven by the sudden or emergent growth of one sector of the economy. Between 1911 and 1921 there was little change in the occupational make-up of the metropolitan workforce, as illustrated in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below. If anything, the proportion of professional and commercial occupations amongst the working population had increased marginally at the expense of the industrial and domestic sectors.

The Commonwealth Statistician identified an Australia-wide trend in the 1920s for a population drift from rural districts to urban centres, which he attributed to slower rural growth, the larger size of rural families, and changing rural work practices accompanying the expansion of mechanisation in the farming sector.\textsuperscript{13} Contemporary Brisbane commentators considered urban drift had more to do with lifestyle choice than economic opportunity, the capital city offering higher living standards, greater educational opportunities and the social attractions of urban life:

> The reason for this urban drift is not far to seek in the great attractiveness of city life with trams and other conveyances for travel at almost every corner, sanitation, plenteous water supply, convenience for getting things supplied to the door, facilities for amusement and social intercourse; but perhaps the greatest things that prompt parents to leave country life is the unselfish motive of giving the children a better chance with city education and enlivening contact with their fellow creatures.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{ABC of Queensland Statistics}, 1911, p38, 1927, p96 and 1934, p144.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Census 30 June 1933, Statistician’s Report}, p49.
\textsuperscript{14} ‘Brisbane’s Changing Face’ in \textit{Building}, 12 February 1924, p148.
With the Queensland economy firming in the wake of the Great War, the popular trappings of industry-based modernity – such as the automobile, domestic electricity, cinema and radio (the latter from the mid-1920s) – were becoming increasingly accessible to a greater number of people, and nowhere more so than in the capital city. There was an attractive sense of optimism in Brisbane in the 1920s – in part due to the new technologies that made life more comfortable and more interesting; in part due to a construction-driven boom evident in the capital by 1922-1923; and in part due to popular anticipation that the formation of Greater Brisbane in the mid-1920s would lead to a new era of urban prosperity.

Annual statistics produced by the Queensland Registrar-General show that in 1930, during the depths of the depression, the drift of rural population to Brisbane was balanced by an exodus to rural districts of persons seeking employment. Whereas population increase had been sustained through the 1920s, the population of Greater Brisbane decreased slightly from 284,758 in 1929 to 279,951 in 1930, before rising again to 283,435 in 1931, 298,142 in 1932 and 301,252 in 1933. Similarly, the Commonwealth Statistician attributed the slower rate of national urban population increase between 1921 and 1933 to the effects of the early 1930s depression:

During the depression years the mobility of men of the younger ages was considerably increased, as necessity drove many to seek work away from their usual place of residence. Many town-dwellers roved the country districts as prospectors for minerals or as seekers of casual farm work or as applicants for locally-distributed government relief.

In 1933 the population of Brisbane was still dominated by persons aged less than 40 years, but less so than in 1911, a generation earlier. Approximately 26 per cent of the population was aged less than 15 years and about 40 per cent was aged 15-39 years, making a total of 66 per cent of the population aged less than 40 years (compared with 75 per cent in 1911). However, persons aged less than 50 years in 1933 still represented a high 80 per cent of the Brisbane population (to be compared with 86 per cent in 1911). As Brisbane emerged from the economic depression of the early 1930s the potential for significant population growth remained high.

15 ABC of Queensland Statistics, 1934, p144.
16 Census 30 June 1933, Statistician’s Report, 1940, p48.
Fig. 2.1

Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Percentage of the Working Population (males and females) according to Class of Occupation, as at 3 April 1911.

Fig. 2.2

Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Percentage of the Working Population (males and females) according to Class of Occupation, as at 4 April 1921.


It should be noted that in both 1911 and 1921 ‘industrial’ occupations included the manufacturing and building sectors. ‘Domestic’ referred to domestic service occupations, gardeners, and so forth. Dependants (mainly women and children), who comprised 55% of the total population of the Brisbane Metropolitan area in 1911 and 57% in 1921, are not included in the analysis of occupations.

Impact of the Great War on housing supply

Sustained population growth contributed significantly to the chronic housing shortage experienced in the Brisbane metropolitan area during the 1920s and 1930s, but it was not the sole cause. Another key factor exacerbating the post-war housing shortage was the failure of new housing construction to keep pace with demand during the disruptive years of the Great War (1914-1918). As a result, in the years immediately following the war thousands of ex-servicemen re-settling into civilian life with their families created demands on housing resources that could not be met in the short term.

Bound by close and very recent colonial ties to Britain, 300,000 Australians from a national population of 4 million, or 7.5% of the population, volunteered for service overseas in defence of the ‘mother country’, with 60,000 making the supreme sacrifice. Australian involvement in this foreign war, along with curtailment of international trade, produced enormous disruption to the domestic economy. Whereas the interruption to European imports provided a stimulus to some Queensland manufacturing – products associated with the war effort (such as tinned food and clothing) were in demand – the Queensland domestic building sector slowed. During this period the construction industry was plagued by shortages of manpower, skills and materials and the most immediate and visible effect of this in Brisbane was that the supply of domestic housing fell far short of demand.

Between 1903 and 1915 Queensland experienced a period of strong economic growth and it may be argued that this growth would have been sustained but for the war. Some indication of the impact of overseas hostilities on residential construction in Queensland is revealed in the number of houses erected under the provisions of the Workers’ Dwellings Act of 1909. The scheme proved extremely popular in the first five years, the number of completed workers’ dwellings in Queensland rising swiftly from 233 in 1910-1911 to 1,591 in 1913-1914 and 1,586 in 1914-1915. However, rising building costs from 1915, which the State Advances Corporation attributed to the shortages created by the war, severely limited house construction. By 1918-1919 the number of completed workers’ dwellings within the year had plummeted to 252.

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21 Refer to ‘Brisbane a Decade of Development’, 8-page supplement to Brisbane Courier, 23 May 1913.
22 State Advances Corporation, Queensland, *Report of the Manager for the year ended 30th June 1921*, Brisbane: State Advances Corporation, Queensland, 1921, p10. For more detail on State-assisted home-ownership schemes,
A decline in building activity in Brisbane during the war years is evident in statistics for new building approvals issued by local governments during this period. Scant record of these survives in official Brisbane City Council archives, but statistical analyses published in contemporary local newspapers help to fill the data void. For example, on the eve of the formal instigation of Greater Brisbane the *Daily Mail* of 22 September 1925 published a statistical review of new buildings completed in the Brisbane metropolitan area between 1916 and 1925 (refer to Table 2.3 below).

Although these published statistics only distinguished between buildings constructed in timber and those built of brick, the greater proportion of timber buildings would have been residential. As the *Daily Mail* noted: ‘From other sources it is learned that the business man prefers brick for his business premises and wood for his home.’

Between 1916 and 1918 the number of completed new timber buildings in the Brisbane metropolitan area fell by 41.58 per cent (from 1,354 in 1916 to 791 in 1918).

Despite a resurgence of construction activity in the immediate aftermath of the war (peaking in 1920 with 2,203 new timber buildings), this higher rate of construction could not be sustained in the early 1920s. Costs of building materials and land remained high, slowing the economy and forcing many couples to wait for better economic conditions before contemplating building their own home. In the interim they were seeking a scarce commodity: residential rental accommodation. Early in 1923 the *Daily Mail* reported:

> Of recent years the housing problem in Brisbane has become so acute that families today desirous of renting a property find it no easy task to secure a suitable home at a moderate rental. Constructional costs have increased to such an extent that the man on a small salary is not prepared to face the heavy financial responsibility, for at present the price of a new house is fully twice that of prewar valued. Furthermore, as the city spreads its tentacles into the far distant suburbs, land values rise steadily, proving another source of worry to the prospective house owner.

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23 *Daily Mail*, 22 September 1925, p14. Municipal approval for new structures within the ‘first class’ section of central Brisbane was granted only if construction was of fire-resisting materials such as brick, stone, concrete and metal (*Queensland Government Gazette*, 30 December 1902, LXXIX:163, p1507). The central business district was Brisbane’s first and premier ‘first class area’, proclaimed on 28 October 1864 under the provisions of the Municipalities Act of 1864 (QGG, 29 October 1864, V:121, p933).

Chapter 2: Housing shortage
Demand for improved housing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Brick Buildings</th>
<th>Value (£) Brick Buildings</th>
<th>Timber Buildings</th>
<th>Value (£) Timber Buildings</th>
<th>Total Buildings</th>
<th>Value (£) Total Buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>354,887</td>
<td>1354</td>
<td>423,052</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>777,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>72,192</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>338,246</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>410,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76,350</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>338,603</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>414,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>203,075</td>
<td>1270</td>
<td>585,141</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>788,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>257,983</td>
<td>2203</td>
<td>1,085,884</td>
<td>2275</td>
<td>1,343,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>238,237</td>
<td>1569</td>
<td>933,752</td>
<td>1630</td>
<td>1,171,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>224,625</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>729,391</td>
<td>1393</td>
<td>954,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>349,522</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>1,229,005</td>
<td>2367</td>
<td>1,578,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>613,940</td>
<td>2618</td>
<td>1,483,305</td>
<td>2720</td>
<td>2,097,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>414,603</td>
<td>2529</td>
<td>1,352,903</td>
<td>2630</td>
<td>1,767,506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demand for improved housing
In 1921 there were 42,378 private dwellings (houses, flats and tenements) in the Brisbane metropolitan area, accommodating an average of 4.44 persons per dwelling.\(^\text{26}\) At face value this very broad statistic does not suggest severe overcrowding or a housing shortage, but it does not take into account the fact that population density rose closer to the centre of the city. Contemporary commentators identified a chronic housing shortage in Brisbane by the 1920s, sustained throughout the interwar years.

Two inferences may be drawn from this conundrum. Firstly, that the smaller ‘nuclear’ family was emerging in the 1910s and 1920s as the dominant social unit, long before the term was popularised in the 1950s, creating an unprecedented demand for single-family housing. Secondly, that post-war society expected a higher minimum standard of residential accommodation than had been offered in the past.

\(^{25}\) ‘New Buildings. City’s High Average’ in Daily Mail, 22 September 1925, p14. These statistics appear to apply to the financial year ending 30 June each year, not to the calendar year, or they may be a combination of both. The area encompassed by these statistics is not specified, but they appear to apply to the whole of the Greater Brisbane area.

\(^{26}\) Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p12. These figures have not been adjusted to include those parts of the town of Sandgate and shires of Pine and Tingalpa later included within the boundaries of Greater Brisbane.
The first inference is supported by data suggesting a decline in family size in Brisbane in the 1920s (refer to Table 2.4 below). In 1911 the Brisbane metropolitan birth rate stood at 26.3 per 1,000 (3,718 in a population of 141,342). Birth rates remained high through the 1910s, despite the death or absence of abnormally high numbers of young men during the war of 1914-1918. Births peaked in 1917 with a rate of 31.77 per 1,000 of the population and again in 1920 with a rate of 31.56. During the 1920s, however, during a period of sustained population growth and with approximately 40 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 40 years, the principal child-rearing years, birth rates declined significantly: from 28 per 1,000 of the metropolitan population in 1921 to 21.17 per 1,000 in 1927 (at the peak of a construction-led economic boom in Brisbane) to 17.11 per 1,000 in 1929 (at the onset of global economic depression). The statistics also show a slight decrease in the marriage rate in Brisbane: from 10.37 per 1,000 of the population in 1921 to 9.31 per 1,000 in 1927.

Table 2.4 Brisbane metropolitan birth rates 1917-1929.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>population</th>
<th>births</th>
<th>rate per 1,000 population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>173,504</td>
<td>5,512</td>
<td>31.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>181,199</td>
<td>5,558</td>
<td>30.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>189,576</td>
<td>5,286</td>
<td>27.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>198,339</td>
<td>6,260</td>
<td>31.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>217,714</td>
<td>6,100</td>
<td>28.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>230,200</td>
<td>5,810</td>
<td>25.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>235,687</td>
<td>5,764</td>
<td>24.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>245,015</td>
<td>5,868</td>
<td>23.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>253,215</td>
<td>5,909</td>
<td>23.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>258,260</td>
<td>5,432</td>
<td>21.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>264,025</td>
<td>5,589</td>
<td>21.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>275,776</td>
<td>5,278</td>
<td>19.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>284,758</td>
<td>4,872</td>
<td>17.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family sizes may have been decreasing, but the number of couples seeking their own homes appears to have risen. Table 2.5 below shows that private dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area occupied by four or less persons increased from 50.34 per cent in 1911 to 56.63 per cent in 1921, while dwellings occupied by eight or more persons showed a significant decrease, from 12.58 per cent to 8.68 per cent.

27 ABC of Queensland Statistics, 1927, p96 and 1934, p144.
The proportion of private dwellings occupied by between five and seven persons also decreased, from 37.08 per cent in 1911 to 34.69 in 1921. These statistics suggest there was an increase in smaller family units in Brisbane - including single persons and childless couples living away from the extended family home.

The size of homes occupied by Brisbane residents was changing also (refer to Figures 2.3 and 2.4 below). By 1921, approximately 59 per cent of all private dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area contained five or six rooms (compared with 49.6 per cent in 1911), while the proportion of four-roomed dwellings had decreased from 17 per cent in 1911 to 15.51 per cent in 1921. The trend was sustained through the 1920s, and by the end of the decade, the construction of four-roomed detached houses had become a thing of the past:

A particularly noticeable departure ... is the size of homes, and it is a fact that the four-roomed house has dropped right out of favour. A few of that size are designed, but they are not one per cent of the whole. On the other hand, the number of rooms provided for in new houses would be slightly below an average of six. The days of the very large house seems to have passed, no doubt, through cost of upkeep and the trouble of securing domestic help, apart from the knowledge that economy in home construction has become an accepted tenet. ... It is the era of the medium size home.

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28 Based on a similar table in Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p7.
29 The censuses of 1911 and 1921 included kitchens amongst the number of rooms but not bathrooms, pantries, store rooms or outhouses (Census 3 April 1911, Vol.I, p396).
30 ‘Cost of Building’ in Brisbane Courier, 16 July 1929, p3.
By the 1920s the standard of the average house had risen significantly. This was expressed not just in the expanded size of the average home, but also in the levels of domestic comfort and convenience demanded by home-owners. Despite the housing shortage, older homes were being eschewed by post-war newly-weds in preference for modern housing with built-in kitchens and bathrooms (refer to Chapter 5).

32 Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p11.
A significant shift occurred during the 1910s in the mode of occupancy of private dwellings\(^{33}\) in the Brisbane metropolitan area, further illustrating rising living standards and raised community expectations regarding the average home. During the census interval 1911-1921, the number of owner-occupied private dwellings in Brisbane rose by approximately 44 per cent and the number of homes occupied by rent-purchasers increased by a dramatic 362 per cent (refer to Table 2.6 below).\(^{34}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Rent-Purchaser</th>
<th>Tenant</th>
<th>Other and Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>10,239</td>
<td>2,199</td>
<td>13,514</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>26,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>14,706</td>
<td>10,159</td>
<td>16,018</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>42,378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage increase</td>
<td>43.63</td>
<td>361.98</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>115.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Figures 2.5 and 2.6 below, proportionally, the percentage of private occupied dwellings (houses, flats and tenements) occupied by tenants in the Brisbane metropolitan area fell from nearly 51 per cent in 1911 to just under 39 per cent in 1921; and the percentage of dwellings occupied by rent-purchasers rose nearly three-fold from 8.25 per cent to 24 per cent. By 1921, approximately 59 per cent of private dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area were occupied either by owners or rent-purchasers, compared with 47 per cent in 1911.

The substantial rise in the number and proportion of dwellings occupied by rent-purchasers was due largely to the success of the Queensland government’s Workers’ Dwellings scheme (established in 1909) and Workers’ Homes scheme (1919), and of private rent-purchase schemes, which made home ownership a possibility for persons on average or even below average incomes.

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\(^{33}\) No 1911 census data regarding the method of occupancy of flats and tenements is available, possibly because the percentage of tenements in private houses was so small (only 1.6 per cent of the total of occupied private dwellings).

\(^{34}\) Rent-purchasers paid out the purchase price of a home in installments over many years, through schemes such as the State government’s Workers’ Dwellings Scheme funded by the State Advances Corporation or similar private sector housing schemes. When the final installment was made, the occupant received a title deed to the property. Occupants paying off a mortgage on their home were classified as owners, not rent-purchasers, as usually they already held the property deed. (Refer to Census 30 June 1933, Statistician’s Report, p347.)

\(^{35}\) Drawn from Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p11.
Chapter 2: Housing shortage
Demand for improved housing

Fig. 2.5 36

Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Percentage of Occupied Private Dwellings (house, tenements and flats) according to Mode of Occupancy, as at 3 April 1911.

Fig. 2.6 37

Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Percentage of Occupied Private Dwellings (houses, tenements and flats) according to Mode of Occupancy, as at 4 April 1921.

37 Based on Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p11.
Chapter 2: Housing shortage

Fair Rents Act

Along with rapid population increase, the impact of the Great War on house construction, and demands for improved housing, a significant contributing factor to the chronic housing shortage in Brisbane, particularly of rental housing, was the impact of the *Fair Rents Act of 1920*.

One of the principal effects of the housing shortage was the driving up of average weekly residential rents, which increased by 51 per cent between 1911 and 1921. Rising rents, combined with the difficulty of procuring rental housing, reputedly forced some tenants into rent-purchase agreements which they could not afford. In attempting to protect tenants from exploitation by avaricious landlords during a period of strong demand for rental accommodation, the Queensland government introduced the *Fair Rents Act of 1920* and inadvertently provided an important catalyst for investment in residential flat buildings.\(^{38}\)

The Fair Rents Act was among a raft of social legislation introduced by the Ryan and Theodore Labor governments between 1915 and 1925. It was designed to complement the *Workers Dwelling Act 1909* and *Workers’ Homes Act of 1919*, which offered government financial assistance to owner-occupier home builders. For those whose circumstances prohibited them from taking advantage of these rent-purchase schemes, the Theodore government sought, through the provisions of the Fair Rents Act, to legislate against ‘rack renting’, a contemporary colloquialism for the exploitation of lessees by unscrupulous property owners.

The Fair Rents Bill was introduced in the Queensland Parliament on the 22 October 1919, the same day that Premier Thomas Joseph Ryan resigned in order to pursue a career in Federal politics. A new Labour ministry was formed under Edward Granville Theodore, with responsibility for Public Works passing to the Hon. James Keppel Larcombe, who then introduced the Fair Rents Bill in the Legislative Assembly:

> The Bill is really complementary upon the Profiteering Prevention Bill. That Bill is designed to see generally that the citizens of the State shall get food at reasonable prices. This Bill is designed to prevent profiteering in house rentals. It will provide that house shelter shall also be provided to the people at fair rentals.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{39}\) Queensland Parliamentary Debates 1919-1920, CXXXIII, p1493.
In the Labor-dominated Assembly the Bill was passed easily, but in the Legislative Council, where property interests were more strongly represented, it was read three times between November 1919 and February 1920. Labor argued that house rents should be based on the purchase price of the land and capital improvements, not on the law of supply and demand. They also sought to protect lessees from short notice to quit premises and from unfair rent increases.\textsuperscript{40}

Property interests argued that the maximum rent allowable under the proposed legislation (10 per cent of the total value of the purchase price of the land plus capital improvements) did not offer the property owner an adequate return on investment. They feared that the new provisions would act as a disincentive to the construction of new rental houses and exacerbate an already chronically under-supplied urban rental housing market:

> If the maximum is 10 per cent, and from that has to be taken depreciation, cost of repairs, insurance, rates, taxes, and cost of collection, where is the 10 per cent? Queensland securities which are fetching 7 per cent are a much better investment. ... I think the man who invests his money, even without the limitations of this Bill, in cottage property is a hero. He is doing a benefit to the poorer class of worker, but he is a poor financier, and now this Government come along and say 'We will make it worse for you.' That is not assisting the tenants. ...\textsuperscript{41}

Opponents of the Bill pointed to similar legislation introduced by the New South Wales government, which they claimed was a disaster, halting construction of rental housing and pushing tenants into more expensive rent-purchase home-ownership schemes. Despite the debate, the Labor majority in the Legislative Council pushed the bill through, and the Act was assented to by Executive Council on 11 March 1920.\textsuperscript{42}

The new Act targeted urban rental housing and was applied to dwelling houses, or parts of dwelling houses, only. It did not apply to rural dwellings or to dwellings situated on more than half an acre of land, nor to shop-houses, residential flats, summer holiday

\textsuperscript{40} QPD, 1919-1920, CXXXII, p2347.
\textsuperscript{41} Hon. T.J. O’Shea, 21 January 1920 in QPD, 1919-1920, CXXXII, p2354.
\textsuperscript{42} QPD,1919-1920, CXXXIV, p2697. When the Fair Rents Act commenced on 1 June 1920 its provisions applied only to the Petty Sessions Districts of Brisbane, Wynnum and Rockhampton, but was soon extended to Mackay and Townsville in mid-June 1920 and to Bundaberg and Gympie in late June 1920 (QGG, 29 May 1920, CXIV:273, p2143, 19 June 1920, CXIV:316, p2502, and 26 June 1920, CXIV:328, p2570).
houses or lodgings in hotels, clubs and boarding houses.\textsuperscript{43} The inference was that families inhabited detached houses on a permanent or semi-permanent basis, whereas alternative forms of residential accommodation, including flats, provided temporary accommodation or accommodation for single persons or childless couples. The inclusion of residential flats amongst this list of exclusions from the Act reveals much about Queensland attitudes to multiple-dwelling occupancy in 1920, the flat being positioned firmly in the ranks of non-family, temporary residential accommodation.

The Fair Rents Act quickly drew negative reactions from property investors, both in the local press and in financial journals. The \textit{Trustees Quarterly Review} of July 1920, for example, analysed the key provisions of the Act, which included the establishment of a Fair Rents Court to hear and rule on complaints from both tenants and landlords, and concluded that it could involve landlords in considerable non-reclaimable expense:

\begin{quote}
The position summed up is that any tenant, upon payment of 1/-, can make a complaint for reduction of rent. The landlord may have to have his property inspected by a competent valuator or builder, pay his fee therefore, and then pay his expenses as a witness. A complaint may be brought out of malice, and the landlord may be put to an expense of perhaps £10 or more in satisfying the Court of the value of the property and in proving that the rent is not exceeding 10 per cent on the value of the house and land.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

The new Act was seized upon with great vigour by the politically conservative Sydney trade journal \textit{Building}, which pulled no punches in labelling the Act as 'pernicious' and 'retarding' and working against the interests of investors, tradesmen and tenants.\textsuperscript{45}

To some extent the Act did work against tenant interests. In protecting the rights of the tenant the Act functioned as a disincentive to prospective landlords, particularly investors erecting rental houses – which had been a popular form of property development in Brisbane for many decades. The Fair Rents Act was identified by property interests as the principal contributory factor in the dearth of available rental houses in Brisbane,\textsuperscript{46} which had reached something of a crisis by early 1923:

\textsuperscript{44} Trustees Quarterly Review, July 1920, pp19-20.
\textsuperscript{45} ‘Brisbane’s Retarding Influences’ in Building, 12 February 1923, p41.
\textsuperscript{46} Daily Mail, 4 January 1923, p7.
The Fair Rents Act is generally condemned, not only by agents, but by property owners, as a whole. The opinion is strongly expressed that the abolition of this Act would encourage investors to erect dwellings for letting purposes, and thus tend to solve the housing problem. Since the introduction of the Fair Rents Act, the erection of dwellings for letting purposes reached a standstill, people preferring to invest in flats, shops, businesses, etc to which the Act does not apply. In the event of the Act being abolished, the law of supply and demand, it is contended, would keep rents on a fair average. As one agent said: The Fair Rents Act sounds well in theory, but it has failed badly in practice.47

Despite the outcry from property interests (which shifted ground in the mid-1920s to calls for amendments to the Act rather than its abolition),48 the Fair Rents Act of 1920 remained in force until replaced by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1948. Its provisions proved a disincentive to investors in the rental housing market and an encouragement to developers of flat buildings throughout the interwar period, and remained a point of contention between business and government.

48 As the housing shortage intensified in the mid-1920s, the building and real estate industry, supported by the local press (particularly the Daily Mail), continued to rail against the provisions of the Fair Rents Act of 1920, but by late 1925 had shifted their campaign from demand for abolition of the Act to a call for significant amendments. In mid-November the Property Owners’ Association of Queensland announced that it would ask Cabinet to amend the Act, either to change the basis on which rent was determined or to raise the rental ceiling to 12 per cent, so as to provide investors with a fair return. Property interests further sought capital value to be defined under the Act as the unimproved value of the land plus the estimated cost of erecting the dwelling less the cost of depreciation (Daily Mail, 21 July 1925, p16, 22 September 1925, p14, and 17 November 1925, p16).
Conclusion

Brisbane's entrée into residential flat-living was facilitated by a chronic, bordering on acute, housing shortage, which had become readily apparent in the community by 1920 and was sustained throughout the interwar period.

Substantial and sustained population increase during the 1910s and throughout the interwar years placed consistent pressure on available residential accommodation – both rental and owner-occupied or rent-purchaser housing. Despite an abundance of land available for residential subdivision and strong activity in home construction after the war, desirable residential accommodation failed to keep pace with population growth and community expectations.

The core of the matter lay in changing perceptions about what constituted an acceptable standard for the average modern family residence. The ability of the less affluent in society to demand new standards in their housing, contributed significantly to the housing shortage, particularly if they were prepared to rent while saving for their own home. In this socio-cultural-economic environment, residential flats provided an alternative rental proposition to the detached house.

Although introduced with the intention of preventing landlords from profiteering at the expense of tenants during a housing shortage, the Fair Rents Act 1920 had two unintended effects: firstly, the shortage of rental housing in Brisbane escalated; and secondly, investors turned to new flat developments, which were unaffected by the provisions of the Act, in preference to the construction of detached rental housing. By default, this Act provided the much-needed stimulus for new flat construction in Brisbane.
The ‘flat problem’
In response to demands from rapidly rising urban populations for additional residential accommodation, which the supply of detached housing was unable to satisfy, the conversion of older houses into flats and tenements became a recognisable characteristic of early-twentieth-century Australian cities.¹

Converting houses into flats and tenements provided Brisbane with its earliest experience of flat-dwelling. The trend intensified during the 1910s and had become a well-established practice by the 1920s, with the number of flats and tenements in the metropolitan area increasing by 156 per cent (from 425 to 1087) between 1911 and 1921.² Given that no purpose-designed blocks of flats have been identified in Brisbane prior to 1921, almost exclusively the increase had resulted from former single-family houses having been converted into multiple-occupancy residential buildings.³

Initially the fashion for converting single-family dwellings into multiple-occupancy was confined to redundant, large nineteenth-century homes. During the interwar years the trend expanded, with many inappropriate small- to medium-sized former single-family homes converted into flats and tenements. During this period the inner suburbs of Spring Hill, South Brisbane, Kangaroo Point, Woolloongabba, Fortitude Valley and New Farm in particular, were transformed into ‘flat-lands’.

This chapter examines the discourse that emerged in interwar newspapers, journals and literature surrounding the widespread conversion of houses into flats and tenements, in the process revealing the dilemma inherent in this increasingly popular economic activity. On the one hand house conversions were accepted as a pragmatic response to a chronic metropolitan housing shortage; on the other, to many observers, they were the road to urban degradation.

1 Boyd, p110.
3 Quantifying the number of houses converted into flats and tenements in the study period is extremely difficult, largely due to the lack or incompleteness of Brisbane City Council records. From October 1925, building registers recorded the number of alterations and additions approved by the Council each month, but rarely specified the nature of this work. In addition, contemporary observers frequently drew attention to house conversions unapproved by Council, which appear to have been undertaken on a significant scale.
Pragmatic solution

The nineteenth-century residences of Brisbane’s elite were among the first to be converted into flats and tenements. No longer occupied by the large and often extended families for whom they were designed, and lacking many of the conveniences of newer housing, large residences were proving obsolete as single-family homes for a modern century. For an owner lumbered with such a house, redundant to family use, expensive to maintain and lacking modern conveniences, transforming the place into flats offered an opportunity to convert a liability into an asset. Particularly prominent were the modifications along the terraces on the periphery of the city (Gregory, Wickham and Bowen), and along Leichhardt Street (north of Boundary Street was renamed St Paul’s Terrace in 1930), where the homes of the affluent were converted into self-contained flats, tenements, ‘furnished rooms’, boarding houses, nursing and convalescence homes, private hospitals, and hostels.

Enticements to convert houses into flats, to subdivide inner suburban allotments, and to erect new housing, were seductive. Jack Lindsay, for example, writing of his teenage years spent in Brisbane in the 1910s, recalled his aunt Mary, wife of Dr JSC Elkington, director of the Queensland branch of the Federal Quarantine Bureau, converting her Kangaroo Point house into two flats, and subdividing the garden to accommodate an additional residence:

My aunt decided to build at the side of her present place. As a preparation, she cut her home into half and let one half. I disliked the plan, which dismembered a charming house (old for Brisbane) and robbed me of the tennis-court. The new house was to be built on what had been a garden with trees, and I hated this crushing of a new concrete structure into the space, destroying the whole dignity of the setting. 4

Data from the 1911 and 1921 Australian censuses substantiates contemporary observations and the evidence provided in the daily ‘to let’ columns of the local newspapers, that house conversions had increased significantly in Brisbane during the second decade of the twentieth century. Although the proportion of private dwellings of less than four rooms fell from 7.2 per cent in 1911 to 6 per cent in 1921, numerically they had increased from 1,920 to 2,540, which the Commonwealth Statistician attributed to an increase in the number of two- and three-roomed flats and

4 Jack Lindsay, Life Rarely Tells, An autobiographical account ending in the year 1921 and situated mostly in Brisbane, Queensland, London: Bodley Head, 1958, p119.
tenements. He further noted that a ‘striking feature’ of the returns for the Brisbane metropolitan area was the decline in the number of larger dwellings and a substantial increase (53 per cent) in the number of two-roomed dwellings. Again, he attributed this to an increase in the number of tenements and flats, which rose from 1.54 per cent of all occupied private dwellings in 1911 to 2.47 per cent in 1921. Not only had the proportion of dwellings of more than eight rooms fallen dramatically from 6.61 per cent in 1911 to 3.08 per cent in 1921, but numerically they had decreased from 1,761 in 1911 to 1,310 in 1921, which suggests that many had been converted into flats and tenements or other forms of multiple-occupancy accommodation.  

Further inference that larger residences were being abandoned as single-family homes may be drawn from the decline in the average number of inmates for occupied private houses, flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area - from 5.08 in 1911 to 4.44 in 1921 - despite the population having increased by just over 50 per cent.  

The chronic lack of rental houses in Brisbane was forcing accommodation-seekers to rent flats, tenements or apartments in converted houses in ever-increasing numbers. By the mid-1920s real estate agents were reporting a keen demand for flats to rent and for older homes that could be converted into profitable flats or ‘residentials’. The practice of acquiring large, older homes in the inner suburbs specifically for conversion into flats was proving an attractive form of small-scale investment. These properties could be purchased comparatively cheaply, and if alterations were undertaken as economically as possible, a steady income from the rents was assured.  

Contemporaneous with the urban sprawl of owner-occupied new homes in the outer suburbs, which reached its zenith in the mid-1920s, estate agents noted that ‘A very large business was done in furnished houses and flats for letting’ and in early 1926 identified ‘an insistent demand for flats’ that the market could not satisfy. The conversion of former single-family residences into flats was meeting a strong consumer demand for residential rental accommodation as well as satisfying owner needs to make these older homes viable, in some situations enabling owners to remain in the family home.

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6 Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, pp9, 12.
7 Daily Mail, 8 January 1924, p13 and 12 February 1924, p12.
In a series of weekly articles on Brisbane’s historic nineteenth-century homes, published in the *Queenslander* between January 1930 and December 1932, Miss F.E. Lord made repeated reference to the conversion of former single-family homes into self-contained flats or other forms of multiple-occupancy dwelling. Of the 163 homes featured, approximately 43 per cent no longer functioned as single-family residences: 19.5 per cent were serving institutional purposes (such as schools, convents, monasteries, presbyteries, hospitals, hostels, aged care and orphanages); 16.5 per cent had been converted into self-contained flats; 5.5 per cent were functioning as boarding houses; and a further 2 per cent as apartment houses.

The house conversions provided a pragmatic solution to the chronic housing shortage, especially in the 1920s when the provisions of the *Fair Rents Act of 1920* resulted in a sustained lack of investor interest in the construction of rental housing (refer to Chapter 2). But why was converting a house into flats more attractive than retaining it as a single-family residence?

A variety of factors motivated owners to convert houses into flats: economic necessity, lifestyle choice, investment opportunity, or a combination of incentives. Financial considerations such as the sustained costs of maintenance and repairs, and rising local government land rates on inner-suburban properties, were strong disincentives to the retention of larger, older homes as single-family residences. Further, the difficulty and prohibitive cost of procuring staff sufficient to manage these ill-equipped, labour-intensive homes, reduced them to a level of dysfunction impossible to imagine when they were erected in the nineteenth century.

The owners of larger homes were not alone in facing these difficulties. As inner-city and inner-suburban land rates increased and the cost of purchasing an allotment and erecting a new house soared in the years immediately following the Great War, contemporary commentators estimated that thousands of average-sized homes in Brisbane were divided into two or more flats. Frequently the owner retained one flat and rented out the other/s as a principal source of income.10

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9 The State government legislated in 1910 and again in 1920 to increase the rating powers of local governments, permitting the general rate ceiling to double each time. In the Brisbane metropolitan area, rates were levied on the value of rateable land which, since 1890, equated with the unimproved value of the land (Greenwood and Laverty, p358).
10 *Daily Mail*, 4 January 1923, p7.
F.E. Lord, in her articles cited above, wrote of numerous instances of well-known Brisbane society families converting their home into flats, but gave little indication of the motivations for this, other than a polite ‘finding the home superfluous to needs’. Brisbane solicitor Herbert Brealey Hemming, for example, appeared to find flats and tenements a profitable investment. In the early 1930s he owned at least two inner-city properties which he had converted into multiple-occupancy dwellings, including the old Davidson home on North Quay (mid-1860s) which he acquired in 1922 and transformed into Bunya Flats; and another 1860s residence, Eagle-Cliff in nearby Quay Street, which he let to others to conduct as an apartment house. He did not reside at either property.¹¹

Again, in common with many investors in the flat market, the Misses Campbell acquired Moana (1886) – a large, gable-roofed residence with attic bedrooms and kitchen wing, in Moray Street, New Farm – expressly for the purpose of converting it to flats, which Council approved late in 1921. No opportunity was missed to recoup the cost of the refurbishment; by converting to multiple-occupancy the main house, a former coach house with servants’ quarters, and another cottage in the grounds, the sisters created seven flats on the property and in 1937 erected a pair of maisonettes in the back yard. As F.E. Lord described in 1932, at least one member of the Campbell family resided at Moana Flats throughout the 1920s and 1930s to manage the property:

... about nine years ago … [Moana] was purchased by the Misses M.G. and B. Campbell, ... who have converted it into flats, to which purpose it has lent itself so admirably that beyond the closing in of the verandas, both upstairs and down, and putting in a few partitions, the original plan of the house has not been altered. … The four gabled rooms at the top of the house have formed a charming flat in themselves … [the kitchen wing] with a kitchenette partitioned off one end of the original kitchen and a dress cupboard built into the end of the passage in place of the server, constitutes a cosy flat now, which is occupied by Miss Mary Campbell, who manages the establishment.¹²

¹¹ Brisbane Courier, 30 June 1866, p1; F.E. Lord, ‘Eagle-Cliff’ in Queenslander, 1 January 1931, p46 and ‘Davidson’s Old Home’ in Queenslander, 30 April 1931, p46; DERM, title documents 10053142, 10099175, 10309132 and 10099175.

¹² BCC, City Architect’s Department, Registers of Building Approvals, approval no. 4,285 (8 November 1921); QPOD, 1922/1923-1940; Courier-Mail, 5 October 1937, p24; F.E. Lord, ‘Moana’ in Queenslander, 15 December 1932, p34.
On the other hand, Mrs Pring Roberts, widow of a well-known Brisbane solicitor, may have been forced into converting her home into flats through economic necessity. Following the death of her husband in the early 1920s, Mrs Roberts vacated the Kangaroo Point townhouse Silverwells (1860s) which she and her husband had been renting, and moved to a neighbouring property, Edenbank (1840s), which she rented and converted into Wyameta Flats. These were especially popular with pastoralists visiting Brisbane during Exhibition week in August, suggesting that they did not attract long-term tenancies. Mrs Roberts occupied the basement of the building (the former kitchen and maid’s room) as a ‘bachelor’ flat, perhaps indicative that the rent received from the ground floor flats was more significant to her than keeping up appearances of middle-class gentility.\textsuperscript{13}

Then again, Mrs Evlyn Thomason, wife of a successful Brisbane pharmaceutical chemist, Henry William Thomason, appeared to find flats both a profitable investment and a lifestyle choice. The Thomasons had resided at Rathdonnell, a mid-1860s brick residence at Auchenflower, since 1912. In 1929 Mrs Thomason expended over £1,000 to extend the attic of her gabled home, which contained a number of bedrooms, into a full storey accommodating three small, self-contained flats. The Thomasons retained the whole of the ground floor as their own flat. Earlier in 1929 Mrs Thomason had commissioned a small block of flats in Hilderstone Street, Kangaroo Point, at a cost of over £2,000, for investment purposes, and later in 1936 a block of timber and fibrous-cement flats in Quarry Street, Hamilton, at a cost of £3,200. The Thomasons appear to have adopted the flat lifestyle by choice, rather than necessity.\textsuperscript{14}

There was also a social dimension to the flat conversions, which, for the wealthier classes in Brisbane, could be associated with progressive, fashionable modernity – as in the southern cities, where the conversion of city mansions into flats for the affluent was a well-established practice by the late 1910s.\textsuperscript{15} As reported in the social columns of the daily press, many of Brisbane’s more affluent residents regularly visited the southern cities, where they became familiar with renting flats for extended periods.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} Queenslander, 22 January 1931, p46.
\textsuperscript{14} BCC, building approval nos.17,897 (12 January 1929), 20,065 (15 October 1929), 32,216A (6 July 1936); F.E. Lord, ‘Rathdonnell’ in Queenslander, 8 October 1931, p35.
\textsuperscript{15} In Sydney, for example, taking a small flat in the inner city for the winter was a fashionable activity of the more affluent prior to the Great War (‘Sidelights on Flat-land’ in The Home, 1 December 1920, pp84-5).
\textsuperscript{16} Refer to Thompson, 1986 and Sawyer, 1982 regarding early Sydney and Melbourne flats.
In Brisbane, the practice of converting large villa residences into a few well-appointed flats for the affluent was embraced by some of the oldest and most respected families in Queensland, for whom residing in a well-appointed and convenient self-contained flat became something of a status symbol. There was a hint of cosmopolitanism in adopting this new form of residential accommodation (which may have served to obscure the more pressing need to resource the upkeep on a redundant villa).

Arguably the most glamorous of Brisbane’s early house conversions was undertaken about 1918 when Mr and Mrs Cecil Palmer (Arthur Cecil Hunter Palmer was a civil engineer and son of former Queensland Premier Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer), converted their Hamilton home, Palmarosa, into flats.\(^{17}\) Erected in 1887, their home was a three-storeyed sandstone mansion of generous proportions, with elaborately detailed interior finishes, and surrounding verandahs on the two upper levels. The building lent itself to conversion into three large flats, one on each level, with parts of the verandahs enclosed for the installation of additional kitchens and bathrooms. A Palmarosa flat advertised in 1918 comprised two double bedrooms, living-room, lounge hall, servant's-room, kitchen and bathroom, and was appointed with gas heating and lighting, reticulated water and septic system.\(^{18}\)

For many years the Palmers, when resident in Brisbane, occupied the upper floor flat while renting out the other levels to middle class tenants, each floor furnished with ‘beautiful old furniture pieces’\(^{19}\). Mr and Mrs Palmer were well-known in Brisbane and Sydney society and their tradition of entertaining Brisbane’s most prominent citizens at Palmarosa continued after the conversion to flats.\(^{20}\)

Comparatively few house conversions in Brisbane were of the scale of Palmarosa. More commonly, even the better conversions of Brisbane’s two-storeyed, nineteenth-century villas incorporated several flats on each level. A good example of this type of house conversion was Nyrambla, a large, mid-1880s, two-storeyed brick residence at Ascot, which was converted into six flats circa 1929.\(^{21}\)

\(^{17}\) The earliest reference to flats in Palmarosa was located in the Brisbane Courier, 3 May 1918, p8 (advertisement).
\(^{18}\) DERM, Queensland Heritage Register, ‘Palmarosa’ (600219).
\(^{19}\) F.E. Lord, ‘Palmarosa’ in Queenslander, 28 January 1932, p35.
\(^{20}\) The Home, 1 April 1930, p3 and 2 March 1931, p13.
\(^{21}\) BCC, building approval no.19,254 (2 July 1929); Watson and McKay, p48.
Plans survive of the proposed conversion, prepared by the architectural firm of Hall and Prentice (refer to Figure 3.1). They show four flats in the main building (two on each level) and a flat on each level in the two-storeyed former kitchen and bedroom wing at the rear. Each flat in the core of the house contained at least two bedrooms (one had a bedroom and a nursery), living room, breakfast room, kitchen, bathroom, water closet, maid's room and store room. One of the front upper-floor flats was provided with three bedrooms. The two flats in the rear wing were smaller but each still contained two bedrooms, living room, kitchen, bathroom and water closet.

Fig. 3.1 Plan of proposed conversion of Nyrambla, Ascot to flats, T.R. Hall and G.G. Prentice, c.1929.

22 The partnership of Thomas Ramsay Hall and George Gray Prentice (1919-1929), succeeded by T.R. Hall and Lionel Blythewood Phillips (1929-1948), was one of Brisbane’s most prolific and successful interwar architectural practices. As designers of the Brisbane City Hall, under construction in 1929, they were arguably the pre-eminent architects in Brisbane at the time of the Nyrambla conversion into flats (Donald Watson and Judith McKay, A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Library, 1984, pp98, 155, 159).

23 Phillips Smith Conwell Architects Archive, Job no. 903, Tube 57 Roll 3 (4 plans, undated - Hall & Prentice), ‘Plan of Residence ‘Nyrambla’ at Ascot showing alterations and additions required in conversion to flats.’
The inclusion of a maid’s room in four of the flats – in each, a small room at the end of the enclosed side verandah, accessed via the kitchen – implies that these flats were intended to attract reasonably affluent tenants.

The Nyrambla flats illustrate a number of standard design practices in house conversions of this period. Although a grand house of large proportions, Nyrambla was constructed to a traditional plan-form found in many nineteenth-century Queensland houses – from two-storeyed brick villas to single-storeyed timber bungalows and cottages. With the main rooms opening off a central corridor extending the length of the interior, and onto wide surrounding verandahs, they converted readily into multiple dwellings.

At Nyrambla the existing 10 feet (3 metres) wide central internal corridors became the common access areas, and each flat retained access to the verandahs from the main rooms. Existing partitions and fireplaces were incorporated wherever possible and doorways superfluous to needs were made secure simply by locking the doors. As in most conversions of this type, bathrooms and water closets were installed on the side verandahs, access to these being via the bedrooms or breakfast room in each flat. The original laundry at the rear of the former kitchen block was retained for the use of all tenants, and a new double garage was erected in the grounds for the convenience of some tenants.

Rarely did a house conversion necessitate the gutting of the interior. Wherever possible, architects used existing doorways, windows and partitions, especially in brick buildings where the internal walls were load-bearing, limiting the removal of old partitions. The insertion of additional non-load-bearing partition walls (usually constructed of vertically-jointed timber boards, or a timber frame with fibrous-cement sheeting), was kept to a minimum. Windows could be converted to doors and vice-versa, and little attempt was made to sound-proof the flats. The objective was to keep the cost of conversion low, to ensure a reasonable return from the rentals.

The re-fitting of terrace houses as self-contained flats also became popular in the interwar years. Exemplifying this trend was Gladstone Place, a row of three, three-storeyed brick terrace houses erected in 1889 on Bowen Terrace overlooking Petrie’s Bight. Although attracting middle-class tenants in the 1890s, through the 1910s the place was conducted as a boarding house, before being re-modelled in 1920 into small, self-contained flats. The design was prepared by the Brisbane architectural firm of G.H.M. Addison and Son. In 1923 the place was described as a ‘handsome building’ of fourteen self-contained flats inclusive of caretaker’s quarters and was considered a model of its type, every flat containing ‘all the most up-to-date conveniences’. As Gladstone Place Flats, the buildings once again proved popular with middle-class tenants, but were demolished in the 1930s during construction of the Story Bridge.25

In the quest to make older homes viable, the cycle of use as private residence, then boarding house (or some other non-single family use such as a hostel, nursing home or private hospital), followed by conversion to flats or tenements, was repeated throughout inner-suburban Brisbane. Consider the example of the 1890, two-storeyed brick villa at the corner of Moreton Street and Bowen Terrace in New Farm, designed by architect William Holloway Chambers for his son Arthur William, a prominent Brisbane solicitor. This fine building functioned as a private home for less than thirty years before being occupied about 1918 as Dunelm Private Hospital, then converted to Marlborough Mansions Flats in the mid-1920s. When advertised for sale in July 1951, the building contained 11 self-contained furnished flats (street directory listings suggest that all 11 flats dated from the 1920s conversion), 8 brick garages, laundry and man's room, and attracted a rental return of £1609/- per annum.26

Failure to keep pace with the demand for new ‘honeymoon’ housing and for rental houses in Brisbane in the 1920s was compounded in the early 1930s by the global economic depression. With the construction of new dwellings plummeting, the rate of house conversions and the incidence of families sharing houses increased markedly.27 Popular with owner-occupiers and investors, no type of single-family residence – from grand villa to worker’s cottage – was immune from potential conversion.

25 BCC, building approval no.3820 (2 March 1920); Brisbane Courier, 15 January 1910, p9, 17 July 1915, p10; Daily-Mail, 4 January 1923, p7; QPOD, 1891-1940; Watson and McKay, p91.
27 See for example ‘Shortage of Dwellings - Home-builders marking time’ in Brisbane Courier, 27 March 1931, p7.
As the Queensland economy stabilised, renewed domestic building activity in Brisbane produced thousands of new homes and dozens of new blocks of purpose-designed flats. However, any anticipation that the revival in the residential construction industry would limit the appeal of house conversions for investors proved unfounded. As the *Courier-Mail* remarked in its review of building activity in Brisbane in 1935:

> A feature of building operations in Brisbane during the last 12 months has been the large number of homes which have been structurally altered, enlarged, or otherwise improved, and, particularly, which have been converted from single-dwelling houses into flats.\(^ {28} \)

Contemporary commentators attributed the sustained popularity of house conversions to the inability of new construction to keep pace with the demand for residential accommodation; a continued lack of supply of rental houses; the higher rents charged for the better-quality purpose-built flats; a continued lack of home-maker interest in older homes; the sustained higher rateable value of inner-suburban land; and the profitability of house conversions for ‘mum and dad’ investors. Flats were proving such a popular investment that even comparatively new homes were being converted. In late 1934 the *Courier-Mail* cited the example of a three-year-old riverbank home at Kangaroo Point that was being converted into two large, modern, self-contained flats. The technology and planning employed were considered state-of-the-art.\(^ {29} \)

Good return on capital was being reported by owners of purpose-built flats, which in turn encouraged the house conversions:

> Architects who plan and build up-to-date flats in Brisbane assure their clients of a return of 10 per cent on their capital investment, and as a rule this is realised in actual practice. The knowledge of this legitimate profit has become an incentive to owners of old properties to gain a greater profit on smaller capital expenditure. Houses worth £500 to £1000 are frequently divided into three or four flats, and the returns are handsome.\(^ {30} \)

In addition to the economic inducements motivating the conversion of houses into flats, there may have been a cultural dimension: a lack of appreciation in some sectors of the community for the aesthetics of timber homes. For some, living in the older style timber house, high-set on wooden stumps, was a cause of embarrassment. Without an

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\(^ {28} \) *Courier-Mail*, 24 December 1935, p6.  
\(^ {29} \) *Courier-Mail*, 27 November 1934, p9.  
\(^ {30} \) *Courier-Mail*, 18 February 1936, p19.
appreciation of the form and function of the Queensland timber house, any alteration, however inappropriate and insensitive to the scale, design or fabric of the building, was deemed an ‘improvement’. The pervasiveness of this attitude is difficult to quantify, but Brisbane’s inner suburbs did support a substantial immigrant population in the interwar years, who may not have appreciated Brisbane’s ‘timber and tin’ housing.31 David Malouf, for example, wrote eloquently of the 1940s conversion of his family’s South Brisbane home into flats by his father, a Lebanese immigrant:

12 Edmonstone Street was a one-storeyed weatherboard, a style of house so common then as to be quite unremarkable; ... It stood on low stilts at the front, high stilts at the back, and was essentially a nest of open rooms surrounded on three sides by wide, cooling verandahs, ironwork to the rails, in a pattern of interlocking circles, and rolled venetians above. ... Like most people in those days, my father was ashamed of our house. He would have preferred a modern one made of brick. Weatherboard was too close to beginnings, to a dependence on what was merely local and near to hand rather than expensively imported. It was native, provincial, poverty-stricken – poor white. ... As soon as it was possible under the building restrictions, a weatherboard house, if it was not to be demolished altogether, should be closed in; and so it was, late in the war, that my father ripped out our verandah lace, dismantled the venetians and, after ‘boarding in' to rail height, installed louvres in galvanised frames. At the same time the house was divided into flats. My sister and I got a bedroom at last on the side verandah, our spare room became a dining-room kitchen, and newly weds (a nice quiet couple in their fortyes) moved into the rooms at the back.32

Only a small proportion of the Brisbane house conversions appear to have been architect-designed. As the conversion of houses into flats and tenements intensified, owner-designed and built alterations became common. Many were ad hoc and illegal, having been constructed without Council approval, and were likely to produce rabbit-warrens of rooms without adequate light and ventilation. Council-approved alterations providing the barest minimum of standard requirements were little better, as noted by a correspondent to the Courier-Mail in 1935:

31 Refer to Rod Fisher and Barry Shaw (eds), Brisbane: The Ethnic Presence since the 1850s, (Brisbane History Group Papers No.12), Kelvin Grove, Qld: BHG, 1993.
Sir,— Speaking with many years’ experience as a carpenter, I am in a position to say that the plans and specifications for the conversion of dilapidated wooden dwellings into alleged flats that are passed by the City Council would not be tolerated in any other city. Even when they are passed, no inspection is made to see that the work is carried out in a proper manner. The only inspectors I have ever seen on a job are drainage inspectors...

It would be interesting to get a slum-dweller from a city that does contain recognised slums and ask him for his candid opinion on some of our termite-eaten, borer-ridden, tumble-down wooden houses, devoid of bath, kitchen sink, laundry, or any laundry convenience, and to cap the lot an earth closet in the last stages of dilapidation and decay. I am inclined to think that his heart would bleed to think that people had to live under such primitive and insanitary conditions.— I am, sir, etc, 'CARPENTER'. 33

Fear of slum creation

The trend for converting homes into multiple-occupancy dwellings was met with mixed reactions. On the one hand the house conversions were regarded as a practical and convenient response to the housing shortage, to prevailing social, cultural and demographic patterns that rendered larger single-family homes obsolete, and to the economic realities of life in Brisbane in the interwar period that necessitated families sharing dwellings. On the other hand they conjured the terrifying spectre of nineteenth-century British industrial cities with their overcrowded, insanitary tenements; or closer to home, the ‘slum pockets’ of inner Sydney, which were among the most physically degraded of Australia’s urban environments. 34

The house conversions of the 1910s-1930s produced flats and tenements of varying degrees of comfort, convenience and privacy, ranging from exclusive, well-appointed, self-contained flats, to squalid tenements in which inhabitants had little access to fresh air, good light, adequate sanitation, or proper kitchen facilities. The bulk of flats and tenements probably fell somewhere in the middle to lower end of this spectrum, though there is no way in which to quantify or confirm that impression. What is known is that poorly conceived house conversions were created in sufficient numbers to concern the wider community about the standard of multiple-occupancy dwellings in Brisbane at this period, and to generate fears of slum creation.

34 For description and analysis of Sydney’s inner city slums in the first four decades of the twentieth century, refer to Chapter 1 in Thompson, 1986.
In interwar Brisbane the word ‘slum’ was invoked by middle-class professionals, social reformers and politicians to brand the most overcrowded and physically dilapidated areas of the inner suburbs as unhealthy and morally degenerate, or to evoke the potential of multiple-dwelling buildings to contribute to this unhealthiness and degeneracy. The context was relative in that ‘slum conditions’ in Brisbane did not equate with those of the great industrial cities of Europe or the United States, but were sufficiently degraded that they challenged the dominant suburban ideal.

Community concern that multiple-occupancy dwellings would degrade existing living standards produced persistent calls through the interwar years for local governments to adopt more stringent building and town planning controls, and dominated contemporary discourse on the Brisbane housing shortage and the house conversions. Middle-class concern was fuelled by frequent revelations of squalid overcrowding in Brisbane’s older inner suburbs. Sections of Spring Hill, Paddington, Petrie Terrace, Fortitude Valley, South Brisbane, West End and Woolloongabba were already as overcrowded, dilapidated and poverty ridden as many a Sydney or Melbourne slum and the house conversions were considered to further degrade these suburbs.

Many so-called ‘flats’ in the house conversions were not self-contained, with occupants sharing kitchens, laundries, bathrooms and water or earth closets. In effect these were tenements. The Brisbane Daily Mail summarised the situation early in 1923:

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35 ‘Slum’ is a relative term, culturally-loaded and class-based. As Renate Howe points out: ‘The word “slum” is an evaluative, not an empirical, term and is usually carelessly applied to mean overcrowded urban areas, unhealthy environments, disorderly behavior, moral and physical pollution.’ (Renate Howe, ‘Inner suburbs: From slums to gentrification’ pp141-59 in Louise C Johnson (ed), Suburban Dreaming. An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities, Geelong, Vic: Deakin University Press, 1994, p145.)

36 ‘The slum was defined by the suburb; the label was freely applied to those areas which did not meet the criteria of the suburban ethos as it was defined in the later part of the nineteenth century.’ (Howe, p149.)

37 Consider the following condemnation of the squalid living conditions found in much of Fortitude Valley, by Randolph Bedford, journalist, politician and social reformer:

... in mean streets of pocket handkerchief allotments, there are families living in one room; families living in mean houses of two or three rooms, with sunlight showing through intermissions of 10 minutes in the roof; and rooms so small that the bed prevents the door opening more than halfway; rooms where unremitting industry, and a cleanliness almost fanatical in its attempts to make bad look good; white-ant eaten, and sheetings which are merely stamping ground for cockroaches, and excuse for the exaction of rentals ridiculously high. If ever the place deserved the name of Fortitude Valley, it does to-day, in recognition of the endless and courageous fight of the poor with a miserable environment. (Randolph Bedford, ‘Brisbane Slums’ in Daily Mail, 5 July 1919, p12.)
Chapter 3: The ‘flat problem’
Fear of slum creation

A solution, but one that is far from satisfactory, is the division of homes into so-called flats. Homes which originally were fully taxed by one ordinary family were divided up by thin board partitions, and a second family installed, making common use of the bathroom and kitchen, and frequently the dining room. That state of affairs has grown to such an extent that it is estimated that thousands of Brisbane’s homes are thus divided. So serious has the position become that quite recently five separate families were occupying a seven-roomed house at Woolloongabba. ³⁸

Following the establishment of Greater Brisbane in the mid-1920s the new Council implemented controls on flat developments, despite strong resistance from investors and the owners of flat buildings (refer to Chapter 4). With the best will in the world, however, Brisbane City Council was unable to adequately control the house conversions. Ubiquitous, frequently illegally constructed and unlicensed, they were the scourge of the municipal council, who feared a deterioration of living standards within the inner suburbs. Being unlicensed, the illegal conversions were not subject to inspection unless neighbours protested and brought the offending premises to Council’s notice.

The make-shift and unapproved house conversions, carried out without regard to the provision of adequate ventilation, light, hygiene and privacy, created a concerted backlash from middle-class social reformers. Calls for local governments to eradicate inappropriate house conversions took many forms, from passionate argument to lampooning. ³⁹ Consider for example the following extract from a humorous sketch published in the Queensland Magazine in 1925 (the text below should be read with an Irish accent):

I often wondher what the city inspectors are doin’ to earn their salaries. Is there a buildin’ law in existence, or is there no regulation regarding over-crowding? Some houses I wint to see had beds on the verandahs, which were either boarded in or had tarpaulins closin’ them in. The rooms in the house behind these places ha but wan window openin’ into the verandah. Now, I ask ye, is that a sanitary arrangement? The light and air av heaven can never get into those rooms, for they must be kept shut for dacency sake, and even if they were open the boarded-up verandahs wu d niver let the air in. ... ⁴⁰

³⁸ Daily Mail, 4 January 1923, p7.
Chapter 3: The ‘flat problem’
Fear of slum creation

Sketches and articles such as the above drew attention to what by the late 1920s was generally agreed to be the ‘flat problem’:

The flat problem, which is causing so much anxiety in the South, has extended to Brisbane, and although the structures now being erected are conforming with the most modern demands the majority of the structures which at present are serving this purpose are far from satisfactory.

Brisbane possesses blocks of flats which should satisfy the most fastidious of tastes, but the authorities should give a careful eye to the multifarious conversions which offend decent taste and fail to comply with the demands for reasonable sanitation.41

With inadequate house conversions continuing to proliferate in the 1930s, Brisbane architects and town planners initiated a reform movement, raising public awareness of the issue and urging the Council to tighten controls on flat developments. The Town Planning Association of Queensland argued that ‘profiteering’ flat proprietors were creating ‘slumdom’ in the city,42 and drew Council’s attention to correspondence received from ‘a well-known Brisbane resident’ who, in the search for a moderately-priced flat, was shown principally converted houses:

In the majority of cases the conversion consisted of one or two rooms divided into cubicles, seldom more than six or seven feet by eight feet, with a common kitchen, makeshift bathroom, and deplorable sanitary accommodation, all common to the other tenants.

The nearer to the city, the worse were the ‘flats’. The partitions were of wood, and in many cases ventilation was lacking. In one instance he was shown rooms which had been constructed between the stumps under the house. The reason usually given for the conversion of houses into flats was that the rates on the property were too high, but this probably was just an excuse for unreasonable profiteering.43

The issue was raised more publicly in the Building and Real Estate columns in the Brisbane Courier in February 1936:

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41 ‘The Flat Problem’ in Brisbane Courier, 2 July 1929, p7.
43 ABJQ, February 1936, p18.
Chapter 3: The ‘flat problem’
Fear of slum creation

In many cases there is such a desire for profit on the part of proprietors [of flat buildings], that the complaints of over-crowding become fully justified.

Few proprietors of this class, apparently, realise that there is a moral obligation placed upon them to ensure the maintenance of health standards, and by their neglect of the well-being of their tenants, bring a buzz of indignant protest not only round their own heads, but round the heads also of other proprietors, who, in making profit for themselves, also do the fair thing by their tenants and the community in general.

In the conversion of an old house into flats, solidity of structure, the separateness of the flats, their free ventilation and natural lighting are paramount consideration. Buildings which, divided into four flats, would fail to pass muster might be considered more passable if divided into three. Where there are makeshifts of three-ply partitions, and verandahs enclosed to become bedrooms and kitchens, the real trouble begins. It is against these unhygienic improvisations that the reformers rail.44

The Town Planning Association of Queensland continued its campaign against the house conversions, arguing that they were synonymous with slum creation:

It is this class of development which is actually the beginning of the evil leading eventually to slum conditions. ... There are well-known conditions of slum development in areas of Spring Hill and the Valley, where no effort has been made by any Council to put into effect a much needed programme of clearance and reconstruction.

It is evident that flats are here to stay. Indeed, in our opinion they have only commenced. The need is here and progress cannot be stayed. Where the damage is being caused is in the remodelling of old houses into so-called flats.45

Lobbyists did not reject flats per se and supported the construction of well-planned, purpose-designed flats and the better-planned house conversions. What they objected to was the shoddy manner in which some Brisbane house conversions were being undertaken, or to Council approving the conversion into flats of small, inappropriate houses. Arguing that ill-conceived house conversions were detrimental to the city’s ability to maintain a high standard of public hygiene, they called for amendments to the ordinances to reduce overcrowding and ensure that adequate light, air, cooking, bathroom and sewerage disposal facilities were provided in the house conversions.

44 ‘Conversion of Old Houses into Flats’ in Courier Mail, 18 February 1936, p19.
45 ‘Town Planners Discuss Flats’ in ABJQ, October 1936, pp4-5.
Fire prevention was a concern, with lobbyists advocating the use of fire-resisting materials such as brick, rather than timber framing. Maintaining visual amenity was a further consideration, with the deterioration of Brisbane’s inner suburbs through inappropriate house conversions appearing to be the phenomenon of the age.46

Whether valid or not, the perception that some flat owners were profiteering at the expense of tenant health and safety resulted in Council finding itself in the invidious position of being urged to control flat developments just as new flat construction was making a significant contribution to the post-depression economic revival.

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Conclusion

The conversion of Brisbane houses into flats and tenements emerged in the 1910s as part of a national trend, and was consolidated in the interwar period as a significant economic activity. Despite the allegations of overcrowding, of leading to slum conditions and moral danger, and of ruining the visual amenity of Brisbane’s inner suburbs, the interwar house conversions remained a pragmatic solution to satisfying a strong and sustained demand for residential accommodation in Brisbane during a period of chronic housing shortage, particularly in the rental sector. The inner suburbs, full of older homes lacking modern conveniences, constituted the principal focus for this activity.

Flats and tenements in converted houses spanned the rental spectrum, from high-rent, fully-self contained, comfortable middle-class flats, to one or two-roomed, non-self-contained, low-rent tenements which owners insisted on classifying as ‘flats’. While it has not been possible to quantify the number of house conversions in Brisbane during the interwar years, contemporary newspaper and journal reports, and the daily ‘to let’ columns in the local press, suggest that the practice was extremely widespread, and more so in the inner suburbs and areas close to public transport.

The impact of the house conversions in Brisbane was substantial. Visually they destroyed many an inner-suburban streetscape. Picturesque streets of timber homes with their cool, shady verandahs providing relief from the summer heat, were transformed at this period into streets of houses under siege, their verandahs and undercrofts enclosed with cheap and incompatible fibrous-cement cladding and glass louvres, their interiors resembling dark, unventilated rabbit warrens. Even the architect-designed conversions of the grand two-storeyed homes of the 1880s failed to address the deterioration of suburban visual amenity when they enclosed beautiful wide verandahs for the installation of kitchenettes, bathrooms and water closets.

The problem with the house conversions was more than simply visual. Fears that health and moral standards were being eroded by inappropriate, poorly-conceived and ineptly constructed house conversions raised the spectre of slum creation, and retarded the acceptance of purpose-designed, better quality new flat developments.
Controlling the ‘flat problem’
Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’

The proliferation of flats and tenements in Brisbane during the interwar years attracted much public scrutiny. To a nation with such a recent colonial past, multiple-dwelling buildings conjured visions of Britain’s worst working-class slums\(^1\), which neither local governments, middle-class professionals, nor the community generally, wished to see replicated in Brisbane. Two popular ideological constructions dominated civic thinking at this period: one was the legacy of the nineteenth-century utopian vision of the antipodes as a ‘working man’s paradise’ (the product of exported British liberalism tempered by Australian working-class egalitarianism); the other was the concept of physical determinism as expressed in the principles of the international town planning movement. The pervasiveness of these ideologies culminated in various regulatory attempts to control both new flat developments and house conversions in Brisbane.

Lobbying for tighter local government control over the standard of flat construction and over the functioning of multiple-dwelling buildings, was initiated by town planners, architects, engineers and social reformers. Their efforts were buoyed by widespread community apprehension that Brisbane’s flats and tenements would devolve into slum environments unless competently constructed and efficiently managed.

**Regulatory controls pre-1925**

Prior to the formation of Greater Brisbane in 1924-1925 the metropolitan area of Brisbane was administered by twenty local governments, each of which produced its own by-laws under the provisions of the *Local Authorities Act of 1902* (and subsequent amendments) and other acts such as the *Health Act of 1900*. While no pre-1925 by-law made reference to flats *per se*, some building and health ordinances regulated the construction of multiple-dwelling buildings and the conduct of boarding and lodging houses. Single-family houses were being converted into flats, tenements and apartments in substantial numbers from the 1910s, concentrated in the older inner suburbs in the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, both of which controlled the conversions under existing ordinances.

Following the *City of Brisbane Enlargement Act of 1902*, which enabled the incorporation of the Division of Booroodabin (Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, Newstead,  

\(^1\) As Renate Howe points out: ‘The word ‘slum’ is an evaluative, not an empirical, term and is usually carelessly applied to mean overcrowded urban areas, unhealthy environments, disorderly behavior, moral and physical pollution.’ (Howe, p145.)
Teneriffe and part of New Farm) into the City of Brisbane from 13 January 1903, the expanded Brisbane City Council developed extensive new by-laws. These came into effect from 19 February 1904, repealed all previous by-laws of the City of Brisbane and the Division of Booroodabin, and included comprehensive building ordinances.²

Chapter 4 of the new by-laws was devoted to regulating building construction. Three classes of buildings were identified: public, warehouse class and domestic.³ Under the provisions of Chapter 4 all plans for new buildings or alterations or additions to buildings within the City of Brisbane, were to be submitted to the City Surveyor (there was no City Architect at this period) for approval. Plans for the conversion of dwelling houses into flats or tenements were included in this.

Although the words ‘flat’, ‘apartment’ and ‘tenement’ were not employed or defined in the ordinances, Clause 16 dealing with rules relating to the conversion of buildings made reference to the practice of converting single-family residences into multiple-occupancy dwellings:

Except in any case the Council thinks it expedient to dispense with the observance of this provision, no person shall ... (ii.) Convert into or use as two or more dwelling-houses any building constructed originally as one dwelling-house; ... in such a manner that the building or part of a building so converted as aforesaid when converted will not be in conformity with the provisions of this Chapter relating to the class of buildings to which the building when converted will belong.⁴

The 1904 building ordinances placed general controls on construction forms, materials and heights but there were no provisions applicable specifically to the construction of multiple-dwelling buildings and few for dealing with the conversion of houses into multiple-occupancies. The more stringent of the building provisions were applied to the ‘first class’ commercial districts: the Brisbane central business district, central Fortitude Valley, and along some of the major thoroughfares of the city. Only very general building provisions controlled development in suburban areas.

² QGG, 10 January 1903, LXXX:7, p.81 and 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, pp.471-553.
³ ‘Domestic Building’ was defined as ‘a dwelling-house and any other building not being a public building or of the warehouse class’ and dwelling-house as ‘a building used, or constructed or adapted to be used, wholly or principally for human habitation’ (which included boarding and lodging houses, tenements and flats). Larger lodging establishments, such as private hotels, were encompassed within the definition of public building. (QGG, 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, pp.483-84.)
⁴ QGG, 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, p.487.
Council regulated the functioning of boarding houses and other types of shared accommodation throughout the city via ordinances made under the provisions of the *Health Act of 1900*. Any house converted into flats or tenements, or in which part was let as a flat or tenement, was required to be registered and regulated as a ‘house let in lodgings’, which was defined as:

A house which or any part of which is used or occupied by two or more lodgers, or by members of more than one family; the term does not, however, include a house where only one lodger is usually received to lodge with the family residing therein.

The 1904 health ordinances controlling houses let in lodgings did not encourage the creation of self-contained flats. There was no prerequisite to provide separate bathrooms, earth closets or kitchens for each room or set of rooms. One earth closet per 12 persons accommodated in the house was the official standard.

In January 1910 the City of South Brisbane also adopted a raft of comprehensive new by-laws, which came into force on 20 March 1911. By-law 3 was devoted to building ordinances, and these bore a striking resemblance to those adopted by the City of Brisbane in 1904. This is not surprising given that both sets of by-laws were developed under the provisions of the *Local Authorities Act 1902*, which stipulated the format and nature of local government by-laws. By-law 12 made provision under the *Health Act of 1900* for ordinances relating to ‘houses let in lodgings’, similar to the Brisbane City Council ordinances. Again, there was no formal recognition or definition of ‘flat’, ‘tenement’ or ‘apartment’.

In 1915 Brisbane City Council revised its building ordinances under Chapter 4 of the by-laws. As before, only three classes of buildings were defined, and although opportunity was taken to expand the definition of ‘domestic building’, the definition of

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5 Two chapters of the 1904 by-laws were devoted to the regulation of shared accommodation: ‘Chapter 12, Lodging Houses’ (this included boarding houses) and ‘Chapter 13, Houses Let in Lodgings or Occupied by Members of more than One Family’. Both sets of ordinances required that lodging and boarding houses and houses let in lodgings be licensed for the purpose, and that they conform to similar standards of cleanliness, ventilation and sanitation. However, whereas the landlord of a lodging house had full responsibility for the conduct and running of the house, in a house let in lodgings tenants also held some responsibilities: primarily, to ensure that rooms were not overcrowded and that animals were not kept in lodgings inappropriately (QGG, 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, pp526-33).

6 QGG, 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, p530.

7 QGG, 19 February 1904, LXXXII:43, p532.

8 QGG, 20 March 1911, XCVI:86, pp1179-1250.
dwellings house did not change and there was still no recognition of ‘flat’, ‘apartment’ or ‘tenement’. 9

This is a fair indication that in 1915 self-contained flats, whether purpose-built or in a house converted to flats, had yet to make their presence felt in the Brisbane metropolitan area. By the early 1920s, however, the increasing incidence of house conversions and the appearance of the first purpose-designed blocks of flats created a very different physical and cultural milieu in Brisbane, prompting the introduction of more stringent local ordinances controlling flat developments.

Greater Brisbane and town planning

Debate about the imposition of controls over flat developments was encompassed within a broader community discourse about the formation of a Greater Brisbane and the need to apply modern town planning principles to control the future development of the metropolitan area. Intrinsic to this planning was the need to control housing density, to which, by the early 1920s, the ever-increasing number of flats and tenements (particularly in the house conversions) was contributing significantly.

The Greater Brisbane movement – the concept of creating a single government for the whole of the Brisbane metropolitan area – had a long gestation period. The idea had been proposed in the 1890s as a pragmatic solution to the provision of infrastructure during a period of economic depression, and the amalgamation of Booroodabin Division with Brisbane City in 1902 represented the first manifestation of the concept. 10 The movement was rejuvenated in the 1910s, but this time infused with the idea of creating a better urban environment (in today’s parlance, a ‘livable’ city) through the application of town planning principles. By co-ordinating layout, zoning, and the provision of services and infrastructure, it was envisaged that planners could provide for the present and future good of the entire community.

9 Domestic building was defined in 1915 as: ‘a dwelling-house, a residential shop not exceeding nine squares in area, office, hotel, lodging-house, refuge, shelter or club, also a stable, workshop or garage in connection with a domestic building, and any other building not being a public building or a building of the Warehouse Class.’ (QGG, 13 March 1915, CIV:74, p881.)
10 Greenwood and Laverty, pp449-51.
Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’
Greater Brisbane, town planning and flats

As a science, modern town planning had evolved overseas in the late nineteenth century in response to the extraordinarily rapid rates at which industrialised urban centres had grown – unplanned and without due consideration for the health and welfare of the occupants. The science was grounded in humanist and liberal intellectual traditions, placing individuals first, but recognising that individuals had civic duties as well as civic rights. World-wide, town planning concepts captured the imagination of those involved in the creation and regulation of cities – politicians, bureaucrats, surveyors, engineers, architects, social reformers and developers. Two constructs were particularly influential: the ‘garden city’, popularised first in Britain in the 1890s; and the ‘structural city’ being developed in the United States in the 1910s and 1920s.

The concept of a ‘garden city’ – a green field development on the periphery of a much older urban centre, fully planned and constructed to segregate industry from residential areas – seemed almost irrelevant in the Australian context, where existing urban centres were ringed by sprawling, leafy, dormitory suburbs. In Australian metropolitan areas the concept metamorphosed as the planned ‘garden suburb’, full of detached housing on small allotments. J.C. Morrell, an influential Melbourne architect and town planner, offered the following definition of ‘garden suburb’:

The Garden Suburb is … generally a private undertaking, and is nearly always a development or suburb on the fringe of, and an extension to, some existing town, providing for housing people of different classes and arranging for proper communication and transportation to the adjoining town, but designed as a separate unit, containing everything that thought and judgement can create for the healthfulness and convenience of the citizens, including such necessary features as reserves, parks, boulevards, preservation of natural picturesque wooded lanes, the allocation of shopping in certain zones, prevention of through traffic, with its attendant noises, in the residential sections, etc, so that, generally speaking, the suburb may represent ideal conditions for home life.

11 The ‘garden city’ was promoted by Ebenezer Howard, a self-styled British social reformer, in To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform (1898), and took its finest expression in the new towns of Letchworth (1904) and Welwyn (1920) (Robert Freestone, Model Communities. The Garden City Movement in Australia, Melbourne: Nelson, 1989, pp1-2).
12 See, for example, ‘Private or Public Gardens? Brisbane’s Fortunate Compromise’ in Sunday Mail, 18 April 1926, p14.
13 Morrell, an architect employed in the Victorian Department of Public Works, was requested in 1915 to present a report to the Victorian government on the potential application of town planning principles. To quote Leonie Sandercock: ‘Like most of the social reformers of the time, Morrell worked from an assumption of physical determinism and an awareness of the cost to society of a bad environment.’ (Sandercock, Property, Politics, and Urban Planning. A History of Australian City Planning, 1890-1990, 2nd ed’n, New Brunswick (USA) & London: Transaction Publishers, 1990, p63.)
In focussing on how to make existing cities function more efficiently and for a greater common good, Australian town planning advocates were drawn more to the 'structural city' concept, with its emphasis on planning for and developing infrastructure to link vast suburban areas to a central commercial core, and the segregation of industry from residential areas through the creation of 'zones' of specified activity.\(^{15}\)

Defining town planning as interpreted by Australians in 1915, Morrell considered that the need for 'proper housing of the people' was fundamental to the concept:

> Town Planning embraces the consideration of everything appertaining to the welfare and safety of civil life and civic progress; the great fundamental principle of town planning is the essence of city life, is the care of the citizens' health, and the proper housing of the people. Healthy conditions of the various sections which together build up and form a city constitute an essential for its successful development, and must be organised under proper control and maintained within that community.\(^{16}\)

The town planning movement, popularised throughout Australia in the 1910s,\(^{17}\) was taken up with great enthusiasm by Brisbane’s middle-class professionals (principally architects, surveyors and engineers) and social reformers, and became inextricably linked with the movement for a Greater Brisbane. The Queensland Town Planning Association was formed in Brisbane in 1914, and despite the name, was largely Brisbane-focussed, lobbying for the creation of a Greater Brisbane in order to plan more effectively for the provision of transport, regulation of the location of industry (zoning), control of housing density, and the preservation of aesthetic amenity, throughout the metropolitan area.\(^{18}\)

\(^{15}\) Australian town planners were particularly impressed with the Burnham scheme adopted in Chicago (population 2.5 million) c.1920, which was one of the most successful American experiments in creating a structural city. The scheme linked vast areas of outer suburbs to the city centre via radial roads, and made provision for parks and boulevards; transportation facilities; a civic centre; a central railway goods station distinct from the passenger stations; and the creation of industrial ‘zones’ (‘City Life ‘Not Natural’. Town Planners’ View’, review of talk by Alan Devereux, ARIBA, in Daily Mail, 22 July 1924, p14).

\(^{16}\) Building and Real Estate, 12 January 1916, pp66-7.

\(^{17}\) Refer to Chapter 1 in Sandercock, 1990 for her discussion of the early town planning movements in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. That the movement attracted widespread national interest is evident in the attendance figures for the first Australasian Town Planning Conference, held in Adelaide in 1917, which attracted 300 delegates, and the second, hosted by Brisbane in 1918, which attracted 600 (Sandercock, p65).

\(^{18}\) Salon, October 1914, p120; Construction & Local Government Journal of Australasia, 12 February 1915, p3.
Greater Brisbane was destined to become one of the great experiments in the structural city movement. From the mid-1910s support for a Greater Brisbane scheme was taken up by both sides of State politics. Although interrupted by the demands of Australian involvement in the Great War of 1914-1918, the movement regained momentum in the early 1920s as the economy strengthened and the Queensland Labor government consolidated its legislative reform package. The City of Brisbane Bill, first introduced to Parliament in 1917, was re-drafted and re-introduced in 1923.\(^{19}\)

Contemporaneously, Queensland town planning advocates re-formed in Brisbane as a professional association and lobby group, attracting high-profile support. In August 1922 the Queensland Town Planning Association was re-established as the Town Planning Association of Queensland with the Governor of Queensland, Sir Matthew Nathan, as inaugural president, and an appointed management committee of prominent Brisbane architects, surveyors, engineers and social reformers. Sir Matthew displayed a keen interest in the improvement and beautification of Brisbane, and under his presidency the association was guaranteed a public hearing.\(^{20}\) The association also found a voice in the newly established *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, co-founded by architects J.V.D. Coutts and A.H. Young in Brisbane in July 1922, which published regular reports of the Town Planning Association of Queensland’s meetings and activities.

A leading Brisbane proponent of town planning at this period was the prominent surveyor Ronald Alison McInnis, who in the 1930s was appointed Brisbane City Planner. Speaking publicly in September 1924 during the lead-up to the passing of the City of Brisbane Bill, McInnis illustrated the far-reaching interests of town planning as both a practice and a philosophy:

\(^{19}\) A hastily prepared City of Brisbane Bill was introduced into Parliament in December 1917. Greenwood and Laverty noted that apart from some new town planning provisions having been included (which was probably a response to lobbying by town planning advocates), the 1917 Bill did little more than extend the powers already available to the city under existing local government legislation. The Bill did not go to a second reading. Over the next six years it was refined prior to the re-introduced to Parliament in 1923. (Greenwood and Laverty, pp452-3, 455.)

Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’
Greater Brisbane, town planning and flats

Town planning, he said, was a movement which covered almost everything that conduced to the well-being of dwellers in towns. The modern movement was the outcome of a growing appreciation of the unity of a city, of the interdependence of its diverse elements, and of the pronounced and far-reaching effects on its future. ... The city was one great social organism, whose future welfare was largely determined by the actions of those who composed the organism to-day, and, therefore, by the collective intelligence and will that controlled those actions. Nothing which might conceivably become part of the city, or effect its future could logically be excluded from the field of town planning. It included countless phases of engineering, sanitation, economics, finance, and every art which could minister to the happiness and welfare of a community.21

Foremost among the social reformers attracted to the town planning movement was the high-profile Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese of Brisbane, the Rev. Dr James Duhig. By mid-1924 Duhig was a member of the executive council of the Town Planning Association of Queensland, and publicly supported the City of Brisbane Bill in the lead-up to its second reading in 1924. Decrying the wasteful overlapping of infrastructure and the ‘uncontrolled speculative subdivisions of land and building of dwellings’, he argued that a more flexible, efficient and planned system of administering the Brisbane metropolitan area would bring community and health benefits to all residents. Duhig was particularly concerned with working-class housing conditions in the inner-city suburbs, and actively promoted a slum clearance program for the squalid valleys of Spring Hill.22

Advocates for change triumphed with the successful passage of the City of Brisbane Act 1924 through the Queensland parliament. Assented to on 30 October 1924 and commenced on the same date, the new Act gave notice to twenty local governments in the Brisbane metropolitan area that they would be replaced on 1 October 1925 with the Greater Brisbane Scheme and a single central municipal administration.23

23 Greater Brisbane comprised the former cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane; the towns of Hamilton, Ithaca, Sandgate, Toowong, Windsor and Wynnum; the shires of Balmoral, Belmont, Coorparoo, Enoggera, Kedron, Moggill, Sherwood, Stephens, Taringa and Toombul; and part of the shires of Tingalpa and Yeerongpilly. It occupied an area of 375 square miles (97,124.5 hectares) with a population of approximately 260,000. Provision was made for the election of a Greater Brisbane Council in February 1925, and for an interim period for the new Council to establish its administration before taking control in October 1925. (City of Brisbane Act 1924, 15 Geo. 5 No.32; Greenwood and Laverty, pp459-61).
Regulating flat construction post-1925

There was an implicit understanding by the community and elected councillors that modern town planning principles would be employed by the Greater Brisbane Council in its management and future development of the expanded municipality. The road to implementation, however, was fraught with difficulty, in which the ‘flat problem’ and attempts to regulate flat construction became enmeshed.

From March 1925 the Greater Brisbane Council was engaged in ordinance preparation in anticipation of assuming full control of the city on 1 October. Media discussion and debate surrounding the implementation of the Greater Brisbane scheme suggests that there was a genuine air of optimism amongst the members of the first Greater Brisbane Council, who approached the task of city administration cognisant of the need to control development in order to plan for future growth. The city now encompassed every facet of economic life from central business district to subsistence farm. Town planning had become a high-profile issue in the city and the first Greater Brisbane Council was keenly aware of the strong level of professional and public interest in how its planning objectives for Brisbane’s growth were to be achieved.

High on the new Council’s agenda was the provision of whole-of-Brisbane building ordinances, lobbied for by social reformers and town planning advocates. Affecting businesses, developers and home-owners alike, these ordinances had the potential to be extremely politically-sensitive. They also coincided with the increasing incidence of flat-construction and flat-dwelling in metropolitan Brisbane.

During 1925 the first City Architect (A.H. Foster) and City Planner (W.J. Earle) were appointed and their departments established within the municipal bureaucracy. Their priorities were to draft by-laws relating to buildings and town planning matters. Due to the time taken to finalise their appointments, work on drafting the ordinances was not completed by October 1925, with the result that Brisbane entered its new era of grand-

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24 The September 1925 appointment of W.J. Earle, a Sydney engineer and town planner, as Brisbane’s official planner (from March 1926 his position was known as ‘City Planner’) so early in the life of the new administration was indicative of Council’s commitment to this concept (BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1925, p142 (502/1925, 8 September 1925), p168 (598/1925, 29 September 1925), p173 (626/1925, 29 September 1925), p179 (653/1925, 6 October 1925), 1926, p116 (660/1926, 9 Mar 1926)).
25 Brisbane Courier, 8 December 1925, p16.
Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’
Regulating flat construction post-1925

scale administration with twenty differing sets of regulations (or lack of regulation) relating to building and land subdivision within the metropolitan area. This situation remained in force until whole-of-Brisbane building ordinances, announced to the public in June 1926, were approved by Governor-in-Council on 1 October 1926.26

The new ordinances were an amalgamation of previous regulations enacted by now defunct Brisbane metropolitan councils, and precedents adopted in southern Australian cities. They were designed to take Brisbane into a new era of progressive building planning and construction and to facilitate Council's key objectives of improving city amenity and living conditions.27

For the first time in Brisbane’s municipal history, regulations specific to the construction of residential flats and tenement buildings were included in the 1926 building ordinances28 – official recognition that flat construction had become an identifiable trend in the city. Their inclusion was also a measure of the influence of town planning advocates, who argued that flat developments should be controlled on the grounds of public health and safety, and reflected community preconceptions about the potential danger of multiple-dwelling buildings deteriorating into slum environments.

The new building ordinances defined ‘dwelling-house’, ‘flat’ and ‘residential flat building’ but not ‘apartment’ or ‘tenement’. However, a ‘residential flat building’ encompassed both flats and ‘tenement houses’. Flat was defined simply as follows:

‘Flat’ means a room or suite of rooms occupied or designed, intended, or adapted to be occupied as a separate domicile.29

Although the above definition of flat does not make it clear whether this type of residential accommodation was self-contained, the associated building by-laws

26 Brisbane Courier, 1 June 1926, p16; Daily Mail, 1 June 1926, p12; QGG, 2 October 1926, CXXVII:87, pp1234-35.
27 Daily Mail, 1 June 1926, p12.
28 QGG, 2 October 1926, CXXVII:87, pp1234-5.

The ordinances also defined ‘dwelling-house’ and ‘residential flat building’ as follows:

‘Dwelling-house’ means a building used or constructed, or adapted to be used wholly or partly for human habitation, and includes any building containing flats, apartments, or tenements, and also a shop and dwelling (provided that the shop does not exceed fifty per cent of the ground floor area).

‘Residential flat building’ means a building containing two or more flats, but does not include a row of two or more dwellings attached to each other, such as are commonly known as semi-detached or terrace buildings.
stipulated that a flat had to contain a bathroom, water closet (if sewerage or septic tank was available) and a kitchen, sufficient to enable occupation as a complete and separate residence.

The 1926 building ordinances shaped the nature of flat development in Brisbane for the next decade. Ordinances specific to flats applied both to dwellings converted into flats and to purpose-built blocks of flats and tenements. Requirements pertaining to the site coverage of flat buildings were introduced, as were provisions for sanitation, light, ventilation and privacy (refer to Appendix 4 for a complete list of the 1926 regulations).

Of particular note were new controls on site coverage, restricting new flat developments of up to three storeys to two-thirds of the site, and buildings over three storeys to 50 per cent of the land area unless the building had a flat roof, in which case it could occupy up to two-thirds of the site. A garage erected at a low level, the roof of which served as part of the garden, yard or court of a residential flat development, was not included when calculating the site coverage. This made steep or sloping sites attractive for flat construction, with the level tops of garages constructed at the bottom of the slope and in effect extending the usable yard area. The aesthetic disadvantage was that an entire street frontage could be taken up by garages.30

The restrictions on site coverage reflected a widely held conviction that every dwelling in a healthy multiple-dwelling building should have sufficient access to light and air and a common yard. This concept discouraged the construction of purpose-built blocks of flats in the central business district, where the higher value of inner-city land dictated that a building footprint should occupy a greater proportion of the site. In non-residential areas a flat building could be constructed to the side boundaries of a site, but open courts were required to provide sufficient light and ventilation to each flat.

The new ordinances placed an emphasis on maintaining privacy in flats. Provision was made for the soundproofing of interiors, particularly dividing walls between flats. In every flat containing more than one bedroom, each bedroom was to be separately accessible, and one bathroom and one water-closet were to be accessible without passing through a bedroom.

30 Identified examples of purpose-built flats designed to take advantage of this ordinance date mostly from 1936-1940, when flat construction intensified in the hilly suburbs beyond the immediate inner-suburban core.
A key objective of the by-laws was to avoid the creation of dark, dank interiors, by ensuring that all rooms in flat buildings were provided with sufficient ventilation and light. Minimum widths for hallways and staircases were imposed which, while not liberal, were intended to prevent warren-like interiors considered injurious to health and hygiene. All common hallways were required to have windows or skylights and ventilation to the outside air. Minimum heights and areas were specified for bathrooms and water-closets. The design or adaptation of cellars as flats was prohibited, although basement flats were allowed under some conditions. This suited Brisbane’s hilly topography, where external access to basements was often possible, and under the new ordinances it was not unusual to find a small caretaker’s flat in the sub-floor of a purpose-designed flat building.

Each flat building was required to have a rear yard, unobstructed and extending across the whole of the site, and each flat in a residential flat building was to be supplied with a system of garbage disposal which could be removed from the premises without being conveyed through the front or main entrance.

These controls were strengthened in December 1929 by an amendment prohibiting the construction of a residential building, or conversion of a building into a residential building, on a site of less than 24 perches (607m²).31 This effectively increased minimum residential subdivisions in Brisbane from 16 perches (404.7m²) to 24 perches.

There appeared to be general community agreement that the 1926 building by-laws, together with the 1929 amendment cited above, provided reasonably adequate control over the construction of purpose-designed blocks of flat. By the mid-1930s, however, it was equally clear that the ordinances had failed to prevent the inappropriate and/or unapproved house conversion, leading to loss of visual amenity in many inner-suburban streetscapes and to deteriorated living conditions. As the proliferation of inadequate house conversions intensified, demands to control flat construction became intricately linked with calls from professional bodies such as the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Town Planning Association of Queensland, for the Greater Brisbane Council to introduce a workable zoning system for the city.

Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’
Regulating flat construction post-1925

Zoning lay at the heart of early-twentieth-century town planning. In July 1928 a preliminary plan for determining broad residential, commercial and agricultural zones within the City of Brisbane was presented to Council by the Town Clerk, City Engineer, City Architect, City Valuer, Chief Inspector of Health, and City Planner, who argued that the plan provided a basis for dealing with growth and development in Greater Brisbane for the next fifty years. If adopted, it would ‘enable the City Planner to proceed with the further classification of the commercial areas into factory, heavy industrial, noxious trades, and other important provisions, ensuring well-ordered growth.’\(^\text{32}\) A three month period was allowed for public comment, but the report was not widely circulated and was not implemented, the Council vacillating on the matter of formally zoning industry.\(^\text{33}\)

In the interim, Council acquired a limited control over zoning by resolving in September 1928 that all land in the metropolitan area not already used for trade, industry, manufacture, commerce or public amusement was now designated a ‘residential district’ under the provisions of Chapter 35 of the ordinances, and that any proposed new non-residential development in these areas required Council exemption.\(^\text{34}\)

Town planning advocates and local progress associations continued to urge Council to prepare and implement appropriate zoning controls for Greater Brisbane, but the global depression of the early 1930s precluded Council from acquiescing. With the depression easing during 1933-1934, however, Council re-opened the matter by appointing a special Zoning Committee to re-investigate. The Committee was nearly ready to put forward to Council a revised zoning plan and ordinances when the State government passed *The City of Mackay and other Town Planning Schemes Approval Act of 1934* on 22 November 1934. The new Act required that any zoning scheme for Greater Brisbane now be presented in the form of a town plan, rather than ordinances, and must be preceded by a civic survey.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^\text{34}\) BCC, *Reports and Proceedings*, 1928, p456 (1734/1928, 3 September 1928).
In response, Council took the initiative and appointed R.A. McInnis to the position of City Planner, his brief being to revise the existing civic survey and prepare a town plan for the whole of the metropolitan area. McInnis was well qualified for the position: he was a recognised authority on town planning, a Vice-President of the Queensland Town Planning Association, and had just completed the Mackay Town Plan which had triggered the 1934 planning legislation.\textsuperscript{36}

McInnis’ appointment coincided with the renewed debate over controls on flat developments. As inadequate house conversions continued to proliferate, professional bodies such as the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Town Planning Association of Queensland called for tougher controls on all flat developments. Within months of his appointment McInnis was asked to review the building ordinances pertaining to flats and to consider flat development in relation to the zoning scheme he was preparing.

In February 1936 McInnis presented to Council his draft proposals relating to flats (refer to Table \textit{4.1} below). They were the product of Brisbane’s recent experience with flats (both house conversions and purpose-designed), which had not always been positive. While there was no intent to prevent future flat developments \textit{per se}, the draft proposals offered more rigorous regulations controlling the quality, impact and location of flat construction in the suburbs and were directed at eliminating inappropriate house conversions. As the council’s Town Planning Committee phrased it, the objective was ‘to prevent excessive congestion and resulting slumming conditions’.\textsuperscript{37} If gazetted, the proposed amended regulations would in theory provide Brisbane City Council with greater control over flat developments than similar proposed ordinances then being debated in Sydney.\textsuperscript{38}

The new proposals included a minimum internal floor space for each flat; largely limited new flat construction to three storeys; prevented the construction of flats or house conversions in narrow streets; reduced the site coverage for all new flat buildings to 50 per cent; and limited the conversion of dwellings on 16 perch allotments to two flats.


\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Building}, 12 March 1936, p103.
Included in the amendments was the stipulation that in areas where zoning had yet to be implemented, the location of any new flat building or conversion of a building into flats would require Council approval. This provision would have a significant impact on property development.

Table 4.1 Key provisions of R.A. McInnis’ February 1936 proposed changes to BCC flat-building regulations.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All flat developments (new and house conversions) proposed outside of areas already zoned for flats, to require location approval from the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light and ventilation regulations to be ‘rigidly enforced’ for every room in a flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No building or conversion containing three or more flats to be allowed unless connected to sewerage or a septic tank system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater exercise of the City Architect’s power of veto over external appearance ‘when out of keeping with surroundings’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No building of or conversion into flats allowed on properties with frontages to streets greater than 5 chains (100 metres) in length and less than 75 links (15 metres) wide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height limited to two storeys, or to three storeys if constructed of brick, concrete or other fire-resisting material, or ‘where there are special circumstances regarding position or isolation or permanent surrounding vacant space’, a greater number of storeys if constructed of fire-resisting materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum internal floor space of 375 square feet (34.8m²) per flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No multiple-dwelling building to occupy more than 50 per cent of the land area of the allotment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing regulations regarding set-backs to be maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area covered by single-storeyed garages and out-buildings not included in the site coverage of a flat building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No building to be converted into flats if located on an allotment of less than 16 perches (404.7m²).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a house conversion, the allotment must contain no less than 8 perches (202m²) for each flat [that is, houses on 16 perches (404.7m²) could converted into no more than two flats].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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39 Based on Courier-Mail, 26 February 1936, p12.
The draft proposals were intended as an interim measure, to be superseded eventually by a whole-of-city planning and zoning scheme.\(^40\) By including a provision to control the location of flat developments, McInnis in effect was experimenting with public reaction to zoning, a concept that was challenging established development practice in Brisbane. The general struggle to implement a zoning scheme was being played out in microcosm in the proposed amended ordinances dealing with flats.

Council considered McInnis’ proposals at its meeting of 25 February 1936, and after some tightening of the language in March, they were adopted provisionally in May 1936, although they continued to be debated in council over the next twelve months.\(^41\)

Council’s action in calling for revisions to the ordinances controlling flat developments provoked mixed responses, and during the early months of 1936 the Brisbane community was engaged, through its local newspapers and in submissions to Council, in debate over the advantages and disadvantages of flats, the apprehension of slum creation, and the appropriateness of McInnis’ draft proposals.

On the one hand Council was lobbied by architects and town planners in a sustained and well-informed campaign, to impose stricter controls on house conversions in the interests of public hygiene, safety and aesthetics. Articles in the local press in support of the proposed new by-laws, interpreted the formal decisions of Council in language more readable, but often more emotive and culturally-loaded, as illustrated below:

There are flats and flats. The enterprise of jerry.builders is reprehensible enough, but a greater public menace is the business acumen of the owners of unsuitable types of old houses in converting them into more unsuitable flats. Such persons are the progenitors of slums. ... the City Planner (Mr R.A. McInnis) recently formulated regulations for the control of this class of building. If the resultant ordinances have the effect of keeping flat life wholesome much good will have been accomplished by the civic survey. ... The new regulations aim at preventing tiny blocks of land becoming the sites of human rabbit warrens ... \(^42\)

\(^{40}\) *Courier Mail*, 26 February 1936, p12.
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The architectural profession supported Council’s efforts to control inappropriate house conversions and for the zoning of residential flat districts\(^{43}\), but the reduction of the site coverage for new flat buildings from two-thirds to 50 per cent was considered a serious handicap in being able to design a profitable flat building in fire-resisting materials. J.V.D. Coutts, in his editorial in the March 1936 issue of the *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland*, urged Council to exercise ‘leniency’ in this regard:

Previously architects were permitted to design a block of flats occupying 2-3rds of the area of the ground; this has now been restricted to one-half the area of the ground, and unless the Council reserves the right, which they do, and show a little leniency in genuine cases, this innovation will cause some hardship. ... We have known cases where clients have paid a good price for corner sites in New Farm suitable for flats, and if they were restricted as mentioned above, it would seriously affect their ability to get a reasonable return on their property.\(^{44}\)

To economic conservatives grounded in the principles of *laissez-faire* the proposed measures strengthening control of flat developments in Brisbane were considered extraordinarily restrictive, an unwarranted public intervention in private enterprise, and ‘an ever-growing obstacle to progress’.\(^{45}\)

In their stand against zoning provisions generally, property owners and real estate agents used the proposed creation of residential flat districts or ‘zones’ to raise the unwelcome spectre of enclaves of high-density flats being erected in the city:

To prevent deterioration of localities in consequence of the erection of this type of building, town-planners aver, there must also be control of flats. It is constantly asserted that flats must be erected in a certain district because the land prices are so high that no other type of residential development would pay. It is the same argument that, if admitted as sound, leads to the erection of skyscrapers. The theory that the price of land determines its use (as opposed to a theory that the use of land determines its value) prompts property owners to crowd as many tenants as they possibly can into a block of flats, and immediately the evils of high density of population arise.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{43}\) ABJQ, May 1936, p9.

\(^{44}\) ABJQ, March 1936, pp9-10.


The Real Estate Institute of Queensland called for greater Council consideration for the owners of older houses. Arguing that high rates and taxes on inner-city properties had reduced buyer demand for older houses as single dwellings, the Institute pointed out that the most economical alternative for owners was to convert these places into flats.47 While admitting that ‘Many existing so-called flats were not fit to live in’ and agreeing that the council needed to prevent unsuitable houses being converted into flats, the President of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland, Mr Ray White, suggested that rather than imposing yet stricter control on flat developments, Council should provide property owners with ‘help in discriminating between good and bad flat construction’.48 He did not elaborate on what form this help should take.

Both sides of the debate agreed that profiteering by flat owners at the expense of tenants’ standards of living should be prevented, yet no one was taking responsibility for the situation and owners resented what they perceived to be further constraints on profits. In the face of this ambiguity Council remained remarkably steadfast. The new ordinances (Chapter 8 – Part II of the city by-laws) were finally adopted by Council in May–June 1937, approved by the Governor-in-Council on 26 August 1937 and gazetted on 28 August 1937 (refer to Appendix 5).49

In the main they adhered to McInnis’ draft proposals of early 1936, including the 50 per cent site coverage for all flat buildings, but had been strengthened with the stipulation that any flat building (purpose-built or house conversion) of more than one storey was to be constructed in fire-resisting materials (McInnis had recommended over two storeys), and the construction of any flat building or the conversion into flats of any building of more than three storeys was to be approved by Council first. The minimum interior space of 375 square feet ($34.8m^2$) per flat was made applicable to existing flats as well as to new construction, such that any residential accommodation not meeting this requirement could no longer be let as a flat.

There was some leeway in the provision requiring flat buildings to be connected to the sewerage system or to have installed a septic tank or other sanitary system, in that this ordinance was not made applicable to buildings containing less than three flats. This

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47 Courier Mail, 4 February 1936, p21.
48 Courier Mail, 18 February 1936, p19, 26 February 1936, p12.
49 QGG, 28 Aug 1937, CXLI:55, p569.
probably contributed to the widespread popularity of converting single houses into maisonettes in the late 1930s. Furthermore, the width of the street onto which the site of a flat building, or building converted into flats, was permitted to abut, was reduced from McInnis’ original recommendation of 75 links (15 metres) to 50 links (10 metres).

The quasi-zoning of flats recommended by McInnis was implemented when the new regulations came into force in August 1937. Neither the construction of purpose-built flats nor the conversion of a building into flats was permitted without the site first being approved by Council. Developers of flat buildings now required two Council permissions: site approval and building approval.50

Overall, the interests of public hygiene, safety and visual amenity won the debate, prompting some optimism from the Town Planning Association of Queensland:

... the flats system of living has become an established method of housing which must be accepted and faced by the authorities. The Brisbane City Council has passed very strict ordinances dealing with the problem which will curb indiscriminate speculation in this class of domicile.51

In November 1939 Council introduced a proposed amendment to Chapter 8, to provide it with authority to approve the conversion of a single-storey building into two single-storey flats, or the construction of two new single-storey flats, providing that each flat had a road frontage. Aimed at meeting the increased demand for residential accommodation during war-time, the amendment in effect permitted the construction of maisonettes and pairs of flats on sites smaller than 16 perches (404.7m²). Although this represented a significant weakening of the 1937 ordinances, there was little debate in the matter and with the provision that no building converted or constructed under this ordinance was to be added to or altered without the express permission of Council, the amendment came into force on 6 April 1940.52

50 The criteria by which Council decided whether or not to approve a site have not been identified, and it is possible that they never appeared in print. The City Planner made recommendation on each application, which in the main was accepted by Council, and recorded in the minutes of its meetings. Building approvals were mostly issued by the City Architect, and only brought to Council if contentious, or a major development.

51 ABJQ, December 1937, pp4-5.

Licensing flats

In addition to the 1926 and 1937 building ordinances controlling the construction and location of new flat developments, the conduct of residential flat buildings was regulated via ordinances drafted under the provisions of the *Health Act of 1900* and subsequent amendments.

Of particular concern to civic authorities was the proliferation of former single-family houses being converted into boarding houses, lodging houses, tenements and flats, in the older inner suburbs of New Farm, Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill, Petrie Terrace, South Brisbane, West End, Woolloongabba and Kangaroo Point. In 1929 the Brisbane City Council introduced by-laws dealing specifically with the registration and regulation of these types of shared residential accommodation. After considerable debate both within the community and in council, these ordinances, with some revision, were assented to by Governor-in-Council on 14 August 1930 (refer to Appendix 6).\(^{53}\) For the first time, official distinction was made between ‘flat’ and ‘tenement’:

‘Flat’ – If in any premises a suite or suites of rooms is or are let out for hire as living and/or sleeping accommodation, and if, in connection with each such suite so let, separate provision is made for bathroom, culinary equipment, and sanitary convenience, then each such suite is a flat.

‘Tenement’ – If in any premises a room or rooms is or are let out as living and/or sleeping rooms for hire by the week or for any longer period, but the occupants of such rooms are not provided with board or with separate bathroom, and culinary equipment, and sanitary accommodation, then each such room or group of rooms let for hire in one hiring is a tenement.\(^{54}\)

In other words, by 1930 a flat in Brisbane was distinguishable from all other forms of shared accommodation in that it was self-contained, with a private kitchen or kitchen alcove and at least one bathroom and one water-closet.

In emphasising the provision of adequate ventilation and sanitation, the 1930 ordinances were directed primarily at house conversions, particularly at sub-floor and attic in-fills, specifying that bedrooms required a height of at least 8 feet (2.4 metres) and a window opening directly to external light and air.

\(^{53}\) QGG, 16 August 1930, CXXXV:80, pp817-19.
\(^{54}\) QGG, 16 August 1930, CXXXV:80, p817.
Whether boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building or flat building (including purpose-built flats), the landlord was required to register the premises annually with the council (at a small fee) and to make the premises available for council inspection.

During the widespread economic depression of the early 1930s, Brisbane City Council experienced considerable difficulty in administering the ordinances relating to the licensing of flats. At this period many families were forced by economic circumstances to share houses and it was not unusual for unregistered or even de-registered premises to operate as boarding houses, lodging houses, tenement houses and flat buildings. Many of these failed to conform to council requirements regarding ventilation, light, sanitation and privacy and were considered a threat to public health.

To provide the council with greater power in controlling the unlicensed use of premises for shared residential accommodation, an amendment to the by-laws in the form of Ordinance 7A was passed by the council on 5 June 1934 and approved by Governor-in-Council on 12 July 1934:

7A. A person shall not use premises, or permit premises to be used, as a boarding house, lodging house, tenement building, or flat building if an application for registration of such premises as a boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building, or flat building respectively has been refused or if registration of such premises for such respective purpose has ceased through expiration or revocation.\(^{55}\)

The 1934 amendment did little to improve the situation. The population of Brisbane was increasing at a faster rate than the provision of new residential buildings, and the demand for rental flats and tenements had never been greater. Critics of the ordinances argued that, in refusing to license house conversions because they had failed in some small measure to satisfy the by-laws, Council was contributing to the general difficulty of obtaining rental accommodation in Brisbane.\(^{56}\)

Possibly influenced by this argument, the Council’s Health Committee called for amendments to the by-laws to provide the Chief Inspector of Buildings with some leeway when recommending whether premises be licensed as multiple-dwelling


buildings. In arguing that too rigid an enforcement of the regulations was creating the slum conditions that the regulations were designed to eliminate, the Committee introduced a new word into Council vocabulary, recommending that the ordinances be amended to permit the registration of places which offered ‘accommodation reasonably fit for human habitation, together with reasonably safe and commodious provision for ingress and egress, light, ventilation, ablution, privacy and protection against fire or other hazard.’ What constituted ‘reasonably’ remained undefined. In its defence, the Committee argued that it did not condone carte blanche flouting of the regulations, and recommended that places in flagrant breach of the regulations should not be granted registration.57

The recommendations, adopted by the full Council at its meeting of 18 June 1935, amounted to a major compromise of the licensing ordinances. Philosophically, this action represented a significant departure from Council’s optimism of a decade earlier and the popular rhetoric that formation of Greater Brisbane would improve the quality of life of its residents. It was indicative of Council’s failure to come to terms with the demand for housing in Brisbane at this period and with the magnitude of the house conversion phenomenon.

However, as the economy stabilised during the second half of the 1930s, the Brisbane City Council again turned its attention to strengthening the by-laws dealing with health and hygiene and licensing provisions for boarding houses, lodging houses, tenement houses and flat buildings. In its report of 10 November 1937 the Health and Town Planning Committee concluded that the Council had experienced great difficulty in administering and enforcing the 1930 by-laws, and presented a substantial raft of amendments designed to make the by-laws more enforceable (refer to Appendix 7). By defining terminology in more detail, providing provisional registration in certain cases, and making stricter provisions for compliance with the by-laws - such as the power to enforce owners to bring shared dwellings up to the standards required in the by-laws – the Committee hoped to control the house conversions more thoroughly.58


At this time Council dispensed with the term ‘lodging house’, arguing that in effect there was no distinction between a lodging house and a tenement building.
Chapter 4: Controlling the ‘flat problem’

Licensing flats

Apparently there was little debate in council over these provisions. The revised and amended draft ordinances were adopted and confirmed in November 1937 and came into force from 5 March 1938 following approval by Governor-in-Council. The speed with which these amendments were enacted, compared with those proposed in 1936 for the ordinances regulating the construction of flats, was indicative of the importance placed by Council on improving sub-standard living conditions in flats and other shared accommodation at the lower end of the Brisbane rental market.

As a result of greater experience with flats and other forms of shared residential accommodation in Brisbane, these revised ordinances (Chapter 48 of the Brisbane City Council By-laws) offered new definitions of ‘flat’ and ‘tenement’:

‘Flat’ – A suite of rooms being part of any premises which suite is let or intended or adapted for occupation as living and/or sleeping accommodation, and which has its own bathroom, kitchen, and sanitary convenience.

‘Tenement’ – A room or rooms being part of any premises let for hire or reward in one hiring, the occupants of which are not provided with board and which is not a flat.

Despite the substantial overhaul of the Chapter 48 ordinances in 1937-1938, minor amendments were made again late in 1938, coming into force on 1 April 1939. Compliance provisions were strengthened – considered necessary at a period when applications for house conversions were increasing and many were proceeding without Council approval. In an attempt to protect purchasers, the ordinance dealing with the transfer of licensed premises also was revised at this time, requiring any transfer of the lease, sub-lease or goodwill of licensed premises to be accompanied by a certificate of licence.

60 QGG, 5 March 1938, CL:51, pp565-8.
A tenement building could include residential and private hotels, which were unlicensed and not subject to the same by-laws and State controls as licensed hotels. However, some private hotels, which offered serviced rooms and may have supplied meals, were classified under Brisbane’s by-laws as boarding houses. For example, the large Canberra Hotel at the corner of Ann and Edward Streets, an eight-storey building constructed in 1927-1929, with an additional three storeys added in 1934-1935, was classified as a ‘boarding house’ (BCC, Health Department, Licensed Premises - Multiple Dwellings: file (9) 314/38/54-NL050/192).

© Helen Bennett
Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 118
Conclusion

With the move toward the establishment of Greater Brisbane gaining momentum in the first half of the 1920s, at precisely the time that Brisbane was experimenting with its earliest purpose-designed residential flat buildings and when the widespread conversion of former single-family houses into multiple-dwelling buildings was becoming a worrying phenomenon, there was strong agreement in the community that the new Greater Brisbane Council should establish rigorous parameters controlling the construction and conduct of residential flat buildings.

These expectations were enveloped within a broader impetus to improve metropolitan living standards through town planning. There was anticipation amongst town planners and social reformers that the formation of Greater Brisbane would lead to a significant rejuvenation of the city’s inner suburbs, where the conversion of former single-family homes into flats and tenements was considered to exacerbate already sub-standard living conditions.

Council listened closely to professionals and social reformers, but the reality of attempting to impose a new urban order during a period of chronic housing shortage, economic boom and bust, and entrenched *laissez-faire* attitudes, proved beyond Council’s capacity to implement. Despite municipal attempts to control the house conversions through building and licensing ordinances, ‘flats’ produced under the regulations were often unsanitary and unsightly places of residence with which the less affluent in society were forced to make do. Illegally constructed and operated multiple-dwelling buildings, unapproved and unlicensed, proliferated, and offered sometimes appalling standards of living.

As a group, the house conversions remained a persistent cause for public concern throughout the interwar period, initially retarding acceptance of the purpose-designed flat. As the frequency of house conversions intensified in the late 1930s Council strengthened controls on flat developments despite owner opposition, but this action appears to have made little impact on the ‘flat problem’. The new controls were met with strong opposition from property owners, who interpreted the ordinances as impinging on their rights to maximise returns on capital investment, and accused Council of contributing to Brisbane’s chronic housing shortage through too stringent an implementation of the ordinances.
In requiring site approval for all new flat developments from July 1937, the Council introduced quasi-zoning of flats which successfully limited the construction of flat buildings in the newer, outer suburbs full of detached housing. The effect of this by-law on controlling the location of house conversions, however, appears to have been comparatively minimal, given the continued and widespread flouting of local by-laws by the owners and lessees of these buildings.

The success of Brisbane’s interwar health ordinances regulating the conduct of residential flat buildings also is difficult to assess. Hundreds were registered after the introduction of the 1930 licensing ordinances, implying that in theory the council had considerable control over them. However, the ordinances established the barest minimum standards for the health and welfare of tenants. Surviving Council records for licensed multiple-dwelling buildings further reveal that continued breaches of the ordinances, principally in relation to the house conversions, were common.

Neither type of regulatory control – building approval or licensing – succeeded in eradicating the inappropriate house conversions, which were the shame of Brisbane. Due to this municipal failure, Brisbane’s inner suburbs were transformed during the interwar period into ad hoc environments, often of great ugliness. The substantial loss of visual amenity in large sections of inner-suburban Brisbane was an environmental disaster. The cheaply converted house, the ugly under-croft in-fill, the unsympathetic enclosure of verandahs, and the poorly designed and constructed addition, did more to establish the character of inner-suburban Brisbane as run-down and aesthetically devoid of interest than any other aspect of Brisbane’s twentieth-century morphology.

On a more positive note, interwar controls on the construction of purpose-built blocks of flats produced a group of substantial buildings making a positive aesthetic contribution to the character of inner-suburban Brisbane, in some measure balancing the impact of the house conversions. Building ordinances ensured that the majority of purpose-built blocks of flats erected in Brisbane during the 1920s and 1930s remained suburban in nature and low-scale both in height and in the number of flats per block. They presented an image of modern, middle-class, multiple-occupancy dwelling acceptable to interwar society.
Modern house or modern flat?
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?

The principal anomaly in the growth of residential flats in Brisbane during the interwar years lay in the timing: that the ‘flat fashion’ emerged concurrent with the greatest escalation in the construction of detached dwellings since the immigration boom of the 1880s. The suburban sprawl of high-set timber houses of this era defined the metropolitan area, eclipsing all other forms of residential accommodation.

For some Brisbane residents, living in a purpose-built modern flat or good-quality house conversion became fashionable during the interwar years; for many others, life in less-than-ideal house conversions was an economic necessity; for the vast majority of metropolitan residents, however, the compact flat lifestyle failed to rival the attractions of a suburban block with its detached dwelling.

The interwar fashion for living in flats was tempered by strong market-driven pressures, social and cultural expectations, and political encouragement, for the community to participate in home ownership, where ‘home’ equated with a detached house on a garden allotment. At this period the suburban lifestyle assumed a cultural legitimacy and hegemony unparalleled in Brisbane’s past, initially impeding the acceptance of purpose-built flat developments as attractive investments or as desirable abodes.

The two modes of living appeared to be antithetical: the working man’s dwelling and garden on a 24- or 32-perch (607m² or 809m²) outer-suburban block, versus a small, one- or two-bedroom flat in a convenient inner-city location. In practice, suburbanisation and flat developments were bound in a symbiosis, the one creating pre-conditions for the other. As hundreds of new homes with all the attractions of modern conveniences were constructed on the periphery of Brisbane, older inner-suburban homes became obsolete, ripe for conversion into flats or demolition for new flat buildings. Conversely, as flats filled the inner suburbs, pushing up the price of inner-suburban property, both speculative home builders and average-income owner-occupiers of detached housing were forced into the outer suburbs.

Each of these activities was made possible by the rapid subdivision of metropolitan land during the 1920s and 1930s – both former farming land on the periphery of the city, and the large inner-suburban estates of the middle classes. Rising inner-suburban land values and rates, combined with the extension of public transport networks to the

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1 Peter Spearritt identified a similar antithesis in interwar Sydney (Spearritt, p70).
outer-suburban fringe, provided the impetus for and facilitated wide-spread residential subdivision of both inner and outer suburbia.

The popularity of both the detached suburban dwelling and the inner-suburban purpose-built flat was encompassed within the notion of interwar modernity, demonstrated in community aspirations for material prosperity and progress, and expressed as a continual striving for improved living conditions. To be modern was the apotheosis, a pervasive ideal permeating all facets of interwar life, including the provision of housing. The concept of ‘being modern’ was employed to sell both purpose-built flats and suburban houses, with the ‘modern flat’ and the ‘modern house’ alike offering conveniences not available in older forms of residential accommodation.

By the close of the interwar period modernity had triumphed with the creation of two distinctive new suburban Brisbanes: an inner suburbia full of new flat developments, house conversions and in-fill housing; and an outer suburbia dominated by new subdivisions with detached cottages on garden allotments. Together, they radically altered the character and morphology of the city:

Our domestic architecture has been revolutionised. The erection of large and commodious flats have replaced many of our palatial homes. It is regrettable that many of these fine homes have, through necessity, been remodelled into twin houses and flats and the grounds depleted. High taxation, of course, has been a contributory factor in this regard, whilst on the other hand, new suburbs such as Ashgrove, Holland Park and others have ‘sprung up’ and built in a more modern type.2

This chapter examines the evolution of purpose-built flat construction in a period in which the detached house and dwelling was affordable for all but the poorest in society. The dominant suburban model is examined, to establish the conditions under which the gradual acceptance of flats as a form of permanent residential accommodation evolved. The evolution of flat developments in Brisbane between 1920 and the commencement of war in the Pacific in 1941 is then examined. This chapter relies largely on qualitative evidence in contemporary comment and reports in the print media of the period, supplemented by statistical evidence derived from Brisbane City Council records and from published Australian census reports. A number of appendices accompany this chapter.

Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Promoting home ownership

Promoting home ownership

In the immediate aftermath of the Great War (1914-1918) Queensland experienced an economic recession, but by 1922 was poised to resume the prosperity of the pre-war era. Brisbane, as capital of Queensland and the State’s most populous urban centre, was on the brink of the most extravagant construction boom since the 1880s.3

Led by a buoyant residential sector, the 1920s construction boom became manifest in a ring of new suburban development within a 3-4 mile (5-6km) radius of the city centre. Stimulated by sustained, rapid population growth,4 between 1921 and 1933 the number of occupied private houses in the Brisbane metropolitan area increased by just over 55 per cent – from 41,291 to 64,118.5 The construction of close to 23,000 new homes in little over a decade (and principally between 1921 and 1929, prior to the onset of the economic depression) was a significant economic activity.

The ideal of every working family securing their own home was enshrined in Queensland Labor party policy and legislation of this period. In targeting the provision of worker access to affordable housing, TJ Ryan’s Labor government (1915-1919) emphasised owner-occupier home-building in a bid to stimulate the State’s construction industry. Amendments in 1916 and 1919 to the Workers Dwelling Act of 1909 expanded the number of persons eligible to obtain assistance under its provisions6,

3 An upswing in confidence in the construction industry, particularly in the housing market, was noticeable by early 1922 (Daily Mail, 6 January 1922, p5) and within a year, a building ‘boom’ led largely by residential construction was being predicted. The Daily Mail, for example, reported early in 1923: ‘The opinion is freely expressed among real estate agents in the city that during the present year there is every probability of a building boom – a boom on sound financial lines. The demand for houses to-day is hopelessly beyond the supply, and many hundreds of homes will have to be erected on these new estates before much relief is obtained’ (Daily Mail, 11 January 1923, p7). Similarly, the editors of the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, established in Brisbane in mid-1922 at the onset of the recovery in the construction industry, anticipated in March 1923 that ‘there is not the slightest doubt that Brisbane is on the eve of a building boom unprecedented in our recollection’ (ABJQ, 7 March 1923, p9).

4 Between 1921 and 1933 the Brisbane metropolitan population rose from 209,946 to 299,748, an increase of 89,802 or 42.78 per cent (Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933, Census Bulletin No.19. Summary Relating to Dwellings in the State of Queensland, Canberra: Commonwealth Statistician, 1935, p3).

5 Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p9; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia 30th June 1933, Part XXXI, Queensland Dwellings. Detailed Tables for Local Government Areas, Canberra: Commonwealth Statistician, 1933-, p2051.

6 In 1916 the Queensland government raised the amount of the loan which could be applied for under the Workers’ Dwelling Act from three-quarters of the total value of land and house to four-fifths, and in 1919 raised the maximum advance from £300 to £800. Loans were repayable over 20 years, at 5 per cent per annum (State Advances Corporation, Queensland Government Housing Schemes - Workers’ Dwellings, Workers’ Homes - How to acquire your own home, Brisbane: State Advances Corporation, Queensland, c.1926).
and the passing of the *Workers’ Homes Act of 1919* enabled persons who did not own land and who therefore did not qualify for assistance under the 1909 Act, to acquire land and house on perpetual lease. There was no assistance to purchase or rent existing residences and the provision of government-funded tenements and flats, which reeked of slum-creation, had no place in Labor policy.

Throughout the interwar years the local press enthusiastically assisted in promoting home ownership. By the mid-1920s (and for the first time in their publication histories) every daily Brisbane newspaper ran a weekly page devoted to building and real estate matters. The housing market was analysed, building statistics quoted, residential subdivisions promoted, home loan schemes identified, ideal house plans advertised and interior decorating fostered. Lengthy articles explored the benefits of securing one’s own home rather than renting, and advised on how to obtain home finance. There were reports of the opportunities to be made in the new housing estates in the outer suburbs and regular updates regarding the number of new dwelling applications approved by Council. The housing boom and associated massive suburban sprawl was the principal urban phenomenon of the age, and a focus of enduring interest.

While the chronic (bordering on acute) housing shortage in Brisbane was a key precondition for the sudden escalation in house construction, the primary facilitating factor was the ready availability of home finance. A tight post-war money market eased during 1922 and by 1924 money for home loans could be secured readily and at cheaper interest rates than for many years, even when finance for larger projects was unavailable.

Potential owner-occupiers had access to four main sources of home finance: state-assisted home loans offered under the provisions of the *Workers’ Dwellings Act 1909* and the *Workers’ Homes Act 1919*; loans from home and building societies; private land and land/house packages offered by developers; and loans from trust funds. Banks generally did not lend for home construction.\(^7\)

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State assistance to home owners (available only since 1910) was the most recent development in the housing finance arena, offering the lowest interest rates and longest repayment periods. The number of houses erected in Queensland under the Workers’ Dwellings and Workers’ Homes schemes rose steadily as building costs dropped, peaking in 1926-1927 at 1,145 – the highest number of state-assisted dwellings completed in any one financial year between 1915 and
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Promoting home ownership

For some owner-occupiers, housing finance was available through the War Service Homes Commission, which lent money for houses erected either on an applicant’s land or on land acquired by the Commission and sold to the applicant at cost.  

The formula of ready finance plus suburban idyll equalling sound investment was a powerful and persuasive one, routinely promoted in local newspapers by the building and real estate sector, as demonstrated in the following:

The young man of to-day, married or single, is hard up indeed if he cannot acquire an allotment or two. For the price of a daily drink he can become a landed proprietor. Thereafter he is at liberty to build whenever and however he chooses. No obstacles will be placed in his way; on the contrary, he will probably be embarrassed by the number of helpers offering.

A dwelling as a form of money-saver and investment is still among the best. Even if the man remains single, and prefers the conviviality of a hotel or boarding-house, he will have little difficulty either in letting or selling his property to advantage. Indeed, there are shrewd persons who make others do all the buying for them in the form of rent, and thus acquire several places.

Given the dearth of rental houses in metropolitan Brisbane in the 1920s (refer to Chapter 2) and the ready availability of cheap housing finance, the impression gained by the real estate industry was that many former rent-paying tenants were being enticed into home ownership, fuelling the outer-suburban land subdivisions.

Tenants in the older and more congested sections of the city, by reason of high rents and the housing shortage, have been made into allotment buyers and home owners, and, with the absorption of a large percentage of all the available land close to the centres of business and amusement, the home seekers of Brisbane have been forced to go farther out into the suburbs. This has created a demand for building sites in the outlying districts, and the owners of large estates, seeing their opportunity, have had their estates subdivided, and some have bought others further out.

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8 Building, 12 January 1925, pp154-5.
11 ‘Suburban Expansion’ in Brisbane Courier, 5 May 1925, p13.
Expanding the suburbs

Greater Brisbane became a reality in 1924-1925 and the enthusiasm with which the community anticipated a great future for their expanded city affected property sales and land subdivision.12 Brisbane was infused with public spirit and community pride, and owner-occupier home-builders were encouraged to believe that they were contributing to the growth of a great and modern city. The concept was used repeatedly by the real estate sector as a marketing strategy, as exemplified in the following:

To the young people of this metropolis are offering chances not likely to be repeated in the future… The terms and conditions under which land may be procured in Brisbane are unquestionably the easiest ruling anywhere in Australia. Values are sound, but not high, a state of affairs which may be varied as soon as the Greater Brisbane Council begins to function. Now is the time for the young folk to set about securing their land, and to think out plans for building that will be worthy features of the City Beautiful we hope to see. 13

The combination of readily available finance, low land costs in the outer suburbs14, the expansion of public tramways15, and continued promotion of the detached dwelling as the ideal small-scale investment, ensured the expansion of suburban Brisbane at a phenomenal rate. Most of the land sold was on small deposit and long-term loan, making it accessible to those on an average income, and a popular form of investment for land developers. Land subdivision and new house construction changed the morphological composition of suburban Brisbane during the 1920s, with new residential suburbs such as Coorparoo, Greenslopes, Ipswich-road, Kedron and Ashgrove occupying what were formerly farms and villa estates.16

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14 Between mid-1922 and mid-1925 the turnover in subdivisonal land sales in the Brisbane metropolitan area was estimated by real estate agents to total in the vicinity of £1,500,000, with prices ranging from £20 to over £900 per allotment (Daily Mail, 19 May 1925, p14). The most favoured allotment size was 32 perches, or two 16 perch blocks. Land in the outer suburbs was the most readily affordable. By mid-1924 a well-positioned 16 perch block in an established suburb such as Toowong or Ascot, for example, might fetch between £350 and £400, whereas in the newer subdivisions at Coorparoo or Annerley the average cost of a similar-sized allotment was £50. Land on the south side of the Brisbane River generally realised about a third less than on the north side and the further from public transport the cheaper the cost of the land (Daily Mail, 27 May 1924, p13).
15 Real estate agents acknowledged the close connection between the provision of public transport and suburban land values, arguing that tramway extensions were essential to the opening of new residential estates. Motorbus services in the new suburbs helped stimulate land sales and subdivisions, but the establishment of a stable tramway service, the route of which could not be altered easily, was preferred (Brisbane Courier, 17 March 1925, p7, 17 November 1925, p17, 24 February 1925, p7, and 5 May 1925, p13).
16 Brisbane Courier, 10 July 1928, p21.
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Expanding the suburbs

The material benefits of modernity enticed many to participate in the suburban boom, with residential construction driven not merely by a demand for more houses, but for more modern housing. The trend was noticeable by the early 1920s, sustained throughout the interwar years, and heavily exploited by developers and real estate agents. Consider the following description of the average new Brisbane house in 1924:

In these days, no buyer or prospective builder will look at the old-style design of a four or five roomed house with pyramid roof and front veranda. The average modern house has five or six rooms, and is of the Californian bungalow style, modified to suit Queensland conditions. Large gables are a conspicuous feature particularly the gable for the veranda. These houses are of timber and iron, and cost about £800. A better class consists of three gables on concrete or brick pillars, with wooden superstructure and tiled roof, and runs into between £1000 and £1200. ... The modern house, besides being a great improvement architecturally on the old style, is much more convenient, with its built-in cupboards, washstands, and sinks, enabling household duties to be conducted with a smaller expenditure of time than was previously the case, and with the minimum amount of labour.

The middle classes in particular were eschewing the large old homes of their parents' generation, which were costly to maintain and difficult to sell, demanding instead a high standard of modern, streamlined, well-appointed housing for their money:

In the new homes, for example, the kitchen equipment is far superior to the crude fittings in the old homes. Central heating systems, elaborate and beautiful lighting, more convenient lay-out of rooms, special living accommodation for servants, comfortable and well-ventilated bathrooms, fireplaces that are almost self-cleaning, sideboards that are also buffets opening to the kitchen, motor garages that are an integral part of the house, brick fences that do not require painting, tennis courts, in lieu of merely ornamental lawns, self-irrigating gardens, vacuum cleaners for all rooms, electric heaters and cookers, air fans, washable walls, rubber sinks and floors – all these, coupled with freshness of design and the indefinable elation that comes to a family entering into an entirely new home, give preference to building over buying to-day.

17 Daily Mail, 6 January 1922, p.5.
19 Brisbane Courier, 14 September 1926, p.16.
Brisbane house construction boomed in the period 1923-1927, probably peaking in 1926 (new dwelling approvals for the whole of 1925 are not available), as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below.

Fig. 5.1

Brisbane Metropolitan Area: New Dwellings Approved Annually 1926-1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1932</th>
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<th>1938</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Dwellings Approved</td>
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<td>2,656</td>
<td>1,863</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1428</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>1,919</td>
<td>1,862</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>1,936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 Little record of local government approvals for new dwellings prior to the formation of Greater Brisbane survives, but a spasmodic record is available through contemporary newspapers. The Daily Mail estimated that during 1923, at the outset of the house-building boom, approximately 2,500 dwellings were erected in the Brisbane metropolitan area, the figures being drawn from information supplied by the various local governments. The main areas of growth were in the outer districts, such as Kedron and Enoggera shires, where the majority of homes reportedly were erected under the provisions of the Workers’ Dwellings and Workers’ Homes acts (Daily Mail, 22 January 1924, p14). The following year was equally active, the number of houses constructed in the Brisbane metropolitan area during 1924 reported as 2,517 (Building, 12 March 1925, pp149-52).

21 From 1 October 1925, when Greater Brisbane became an administrative reality, the Brisbane City Council kept meticulous records of all building applications approved, including those for new dwellings. While not every approval came to fruition, they remain strongly indicative of the rate of home building activity in Greater Brisbane prior to the commencement of the Pacific war in late 1941. The graph in Figure 5.1 is based on the number of new dwellings approved for the full years 1926 to 1941, extracted from Brisbane City Council’s Registers of Building Approvals, 1926-1941. For the years in which register entries are missing (1935, 1937(part) and 1939) statistics have been obtained from a published source, the Sydney journal Building, which from the late 1930s presented an annual review of new building activity in each capital city (Building, 24 February 1939, p50, 24 February 1940, p52 and 24 February 1941, p40).
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Expanding the suburbs

While it was evident to many observers that the Queensland economy had slowed after 1926, reflected in a steady decline in Brisbane housing approvals from just over 3,000 in 1926 to just under 1,500 in 1929, a drop of well over 50 per cent, few could have predicted the scale of the economic depression into which Australia was plunged in 1930. The construction industry was the worst-affected sector and residential construction (new homes, purpose-built flats, and house additions and alterations), which had supported smaller builders through the 1920s, declined markedly.22

The impact of the depression on suburban sprawl in Greater Brisbane was immediate. Land subdivision and home building plummeted to record lows during 1930-1933.23 As discussed in Chapter 3, at this period the conversion of houses into flats and tenements or the incidence of families sharing houses intensified.

Queensland’s agriculture-based economy proved more robust than the industrialised states of New South Wales and Victoria, entering a recovery phase from 1934. By 1935 Brisbane was experiencing a pronounced escalation in residential construction, reputedly driven by owner-builders rather than speculators.24 Housing finance remained readily available and affordable during the second half of the 1930s, and borrowing against insurance policies for home construction was proving popular.25

Sustained lower land costs on the suburban periphery and announcements of proposed tramway extensions attracted renewed intensive land subdivision and home building in districts such as Coorparoo, Holland Park, Ashgrove, Wilston, The Grange, Toowong, Taringa, St Lucia, Indooroopilly, Kedron and Gordon Park.26

22 Brisbane Courier, 14 October 1930, p3 and 27 March 1931, p7.
23 The number of new dwellings approved by Council reached a trough in 1931, with a decrease of approximately 85 per cent from peak approvals in 1926. Despite claims by financial institutions in mid-1932 that home finance was not tight, investor confidence and owner-occupier ability to service home loans remained low. Approvals for new dwellings in Brisbane rose only slightly in 1932 and 1933, exacerbating Brisbane’s chronic housing shortage (BCC, Registers of Building Approvals, 1926-1941; Brisbane Courier, 22 July 1932, p4; Courier-Mail, 3 March 1936, p21).
25 ‘The people of Brisbane are freely adopting the idea of borrowing from insurance companies, which will advance 70 per cent of the value of a capital investment, the loan bearing an interest rate of 5½ per cent. An insurance scheme sets out that, by the time policies taken out at the same time that the loan is obtained by a client mature, they materially reduce the interest payable by clients. In effect, a person desiring to embark on a £1000 building scheme requires to put up as a deposit only £300.’ (Courier-Mail, 3 March 1936, p21.) See also ABJQ, December 1936, p8.
As in the boom days of the 1920s, the desire for modern homes fuelled the land subdivisions of the 1930s, with older homes in the inner suburbs remaining difficult to sell ‘except for investment purposes and at very low prices’.27 Opting for a newly-built house offered financial advantage, greater comforts (built-ins, tiled bathrooms, and an indoor water closet), and a modern aesthetic appearance to the home: The ‘modern home’, however modest, made a clear statement about the modernity of its owners:

… the president of the Real Estate Institute (Mr Ray White) said that buyers of homes these days were not satisfied with anything that was not modern in lay-out, construction, and service. In a house worth £600 for instance, the purchaser required a modern bathroom, and in many cases, papered or panelled walls and plaster ceilings. Furthermore, the exterior of the house must have some claim to artistic treatment. Unbroken roof lines such as marked many old houses were unpopular.28

While appealing principally to young couples, the desire to participate in this form of modernity permeated all sectors of the owner-occupier market, with first home buyers not alone in heading to the outer suburbs in search of a modern house. By the mid-1930s realtors had identified a new trend, claiming that many owners of established inner-suburban homes were relocating to the new outer suburbs:

Numbered amongst the buyers in the newer and more open suburbs were many persons who left properties in the older and more densely-populated suburbs. Because a new spirit had entered into home-construction hundreds of houses that had formerly served the purposes of their owners were now considered obsolete.29

The commencement of hostilities in Europe in September 1939 and Australia’s commitment to support Britain in that war, immediately placed on hold a number of larger commercial and industrial construction projects planned for Brisbane. However, during the early stages of the war, Commonwealth and State governments adopted a ‘business as usual’ strategy in a bid to sustain public confidence in the economy, actively encouraging home-building. On 13 November 1939, a 20-page “‘Business as Usual” Bulletin’ was circulated with Brisbane’s Courier-Mail, with the express purpose of encouraging Queenslanders to invest in their State. Fifty per cent of the bulletin

27 Courier-Mail, 14 May 1935, p11; see also Courier-Mail, 7 April 1936, p4.
The ‘investment purposes’ mentioned in the May 1935 article probably alluded to the conversion of older homes into flats, or the demolition of an older home and the erection of a purpose-designed block of modern flats in its stead.
was devoted to promoting the ownership, building and remodelling of domestic housing, with articles on how building societies and insurance companies could assist people who did not qualify for State Advances Corporation home loans, and a manifesto equating home building with patriotic duty (refer to Appendix 8). The bulletin reflected the significance of the residential construction industry to the economy and illustrated the continued, pervasive and seductive power of the suburban idyll.  

Public response to this form of encouragement, combined with community uncertainty about future access to home-building during wartime, produced an upsurge in applications for new dwelling approvals in Brisbane in late 1939. Applications decreased slightly in 1940 but, despite the threat of Japanese expansionist activity in the Pacific and South-east Asia, which plunged Australia into a war-economy mode very different to that of late 1939, approvals rose again in 1941 to 1,936 – the highest annual figure since 1927 (refer to Figure 5.1 above).

In June 1941 the Commonwealth government imposed national security regulations, under which the consent of the Federal Treasurer was required for new domestic construction costing over £3000, or alterations exceeding £250 (refer to Appendix 9). In reality the regulations had limited impact on new dwelling construction in Brisbane, where the majority of new homes were priced under £1,000, and anticipation of further shortages of materials and labour was producing a sustained demand for new housing. Ultimately, new house construction was constricted due to wartime shortages of labour and materials, rather than as an outcome of the national security regulations, or of any reduction in the demand for new homes or in the ability of consumers to finance home building.

A strong demand for and creation of new, modern housing, then, was a notable characteristic of metropolitan Brisbane in the years between the first and second world wars. Principally this demand was satisfied in the form of a detached suburban dwelling, but for those either unable or unwilling to participate in the suburban lifestyle with its house, garden and labour-intensive maintenance, there was an alternative emerging in the purpose-built, compact, convenient, modern, self-contained flat.

31 ABJQ, January 1940, pp15-6.
32 ‘National Security (Building Control) Regulations’ gazetted on 11 June 1941, in Building, 24 July 1941, p11.
A modern alternative: purpose-built flats

Despite the strong social, cultural, economic and political pressures to buy or build one’s own home, the fashion for living in a rented flat accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s. The housing shortage may initially have forced into flat occupancy those who normally would have chosen to rent a house, but as purpose-built modern flats began to make an impression in the cityscape, living in flats for some persons became not just a necessity, but a lifestyle choice.

Of the two types of flats available in interwar Brisbane – houses converted into flats and the purpose-built blocks of flats – the house conversions appear to have been the more numerous, having become commonplace by 1920 (refer to Chapter 3) when the purpose-built flat was only just emerging as an alternative investment and lifestyle choice. Purpose-built blocks of flats were a product of the interwar years, having no precedent in the city prior to the 1920s.

Between 1920 and 1939 purpose-built flat buildings moved from experiment to popular investment; from being targeted exclusively at the middle-classes to accommodating tenants from a range of socio-economic levels; and from the unusual to the commonplace in inner suburbia.  

If entrepreneurial vision had come to fruition, Brisbane would have entered the purpose-built flat market in glorious fashion. On 13 November 1919 an advertisement appeared in the *Brisbane Courier* offering shares in Gardens Residential Flats Limited, the objective being to raise capital to construct a £43,000, eight-storeyed, high-rise block of 48 self-contained residential flats in Alice Street, adjacent to the Queensland Club and overlooking the Brisbane Botanic Gardens. Accompanying the advertisement was a sketch of the design, prepared by Sydney-based architect Claude Hamilton (refer to Figure 5.2 below). Construction was to be supervised by the well-known Brisbane architectural firm of H.W. Atkinson and A.H. Conrad. To accommodate the warm Queensland climate, each flat was to be provided with a ‘spacious balcony’. Modelled on inner Sydney high-rise flats, the scheme was to include: a roof café, which also would deliver meals to tenants if requested; accommodation for maids, who would provide housekeeping services by arrangement; and motor garages in the grounds.  

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33 Refer to Appendix 11 for a statistical overview 1920-1941.
34 *Brisbane Courier*, 13 November 1919, p11.
Shareholders were to be given preference to the flats, but it was not a co-operative flat scheme along the lines developed in the United States.\textsuperscript{35} The project was a company investment scheme, supported by prominent Queenslanders and backed by the Queensland National Bank. Although promoted in the local press for over six months,\textsuperscript{36} the Gardens Residential Flats did not eventuate. It would seem that too few investors were willing to risk capital on Brisbane accepting Sydney-style flats.

Gardens Residential Flats was the first and only large-scale, high-rise flat development identified as having been proposed in Brisbane during the interwar period. If the concept had come to fruition, flat developments in Brisbane may have followed a very different path, more akin to the high-rise flats erected in Sydney districts such as Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay and Darlinghurst on the periphery of the city centre.

\textsuperscript{35} Refer to \textit{Building}, 11 March 1922, pp66-8 and 12 November 1923, pp49-54. The non-profit, co-operative model of ownership developed in the United States involved the formation of a syndicate or co-operative, with members pooling resources to buy land and erect a block of flats. Shares in the syndicate or co-operative entitled members to an apartment or apartments, depending on the number of shares held. Rates and maintenance costs etc were paid for by a levy on members (similar to today’s body corporate fees), and flats could be on-sold by selling the shares in the co-operative. This model had the potential to work well in interwar Queensland, where it was not possible in law to purchase an individual flat or floor in a block of flats.

Early flat experiments 1920-1925: ‘a new era of homes’

With the rejection of large-scale inner-city flat developments so early in the city’s foray into flat buildings, Brisbane investors turned to smaller, domestic-scale developments in the inner suburbs, similar to what was being achieved in Melbourne at this period.37

The earliest of Brisbane’s purpose-built flats were experimental investments which had little or no impact on reducing the housing shortage. Uncertain of how the market would react to this new form of living, developers and investors concentrated on the construction of good-quality, brick or concrete, two- or three-storeyed blocks, usually of four to six flats, located in inner suburbs on sites close to public transport (refer to Appendix 10). Well-finished and appointed, and promoted as the epitome of modernity, these flats were designed to attract tenants who could afford the consequently higher rents (reputedly commanding in some instances as much as four to six guineas per week).38 They were extremely successful as letting propositions, but catered for a very small proportion of persons seeking rental accommodation:

Flats of this type are the modern solution of the housing problem, but of necessity can only provide relief for a comparatively small section of the public. These flats are completely self-contained, consisting of two-bedrooms, living room, kitchenette, and bathroom, and spacious verandas; being also fitted with electric light, gas, water, and septic tanks. But these can well be termed the ‘luxury’ flats, and are far out of the reach of the ordinary man, who is limited at the outside to a rental of £2 a week. All these high-class flats are filled, and the demand for them at the present time is good.39

There appears to have been a correlation between the sustained lack of investor interest in constructing rental housing following the implementation of the Fair Rents Act of 1920, an easing of the money market in 1922,40 and Brisbane’s first forays into the construction of purpose-designed flats.

38 The average weekly rent for an unfurnished house, tenement or flat in Brisbane in 1921 was 17s 3d, and only 6.37 per cent of tenanted private dwellings (which included tenements and flats) were rented at 30s or over per week (Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p12).
40 Daily Mail, 6 January 1922, p5.
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Early flat experiments 1920-1925: ‘a new era of homes’

At least nine blocks of middle-class brick flats were erected in Brisbane’s inner suburbs in 1921-1923, creating a small flurry of flat construction. The earliest identified is Simla Flats (1921) in New Farm – a two-storeyed brick building of originally four well-appointed flats.41 Again at New Farm, Langshaw House (1922), a block of six flats over three levels, with servant’s quarters in each flat, was considered a model flat development:

In Langshaw-street is an example of modern flat-designing which more nearly approaches the perfect flats than anything at present in Brisbane. The building is of three stories, rigidly formal in its design, and built of brick rough-casted. Every flat is entirely self-contained, and the most modern improvements have been introduced to make easy the life of the flat dwellers.42

The early purpose-built flats were few in number but highly visible in Brisbane’s inner suburbs and at the outset they were labelled by vested interests as an ‘unnatural’ form of domestic accommodation for Brisbane. This was particularly true of opponents of the Fair Rents Act.43 One local real estate agent expressed the view that flats simply did not appeal to the majority of Brisbane residents, who preferred to live in detached housing in open suburbs. Another claimed that landlords were reluctant to allow children to occupy flats, thereby deterring flat occupancy. There was some recognition that a potential market existed in Brisbane for the purpose-designed ‘working man’s flat’ renting at about 30s per week, but flats of this type were not considered profitable ventures in the existing money market.44

While finance for the construction of detached housing, especially by owner-occupiers, was readily available, investors in multiple-occupancy dwellings were finding money much more difficult to borrow, and a period of industrial unrest in the construction industry early in 1923 appears to have compounded the situation.45

41 BCC, building approval no.4,091 (16 February 1921); Brisbane Courier, 1 June 1921, p2, 9 July 1921, p13, 7 September 1921, p2; Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board, ‘Survey Field Book 42C’, Jun-Nov 1912 (updated 1916 & 1924), fol.119.
42 ABJO, 7 February 1924, p18.
43 See, for example, Building, 12 February 1923, p41.
44 Daily Mail, 4 January 1923, p7.
45 Early in 1923 a dispute in the building industry in Brisbane escalated into strike action by carpenters and joiners when employers reverted to paying by the hour rather than the week. Contemporary reports indicate that the strike did not have a significant retarding influence on suburban house construction, the demand for new housing being so great (see Building, 12 January 1923, pp35, 37 and 12 February 1923, p49).
Although the early blocks readily attracted tenants, the impetus for their construction declined after 1923. In late December 1924 the *Daily Mail* estimated that only about 12 blocks of purpose-built flats had been erected in Brisbane since the beginning of 1920,\(^{46}\) and anticipated that any increased demand would be slow in eventuating:

> It is recognised by the investor in such real estate that Brisbane will have with each succeeding year an addition to the class of people who find, through various private reasons, that the flat is better suited to their requirements, and, as the demand grows, so will the energies of the investor find its scope for development. It will be years, if at all, before anything like a general change in the life of its people will come. This is the opinion of those best capable of judging the position.\(^{47}\)

One form of flat development which interested investors from the early 1920s and remained popular throughout the interwar period was the combination of commercial premises and residential flats – a reinterpretation of the much older shop-house popular in Brisbane in the nineteenth century.\(^{48}\) The interwar buildings differed from the earlier shop-houses in that the flats could be accessed independently of the commercial spaces below, and therefore were not intended solely for the use of the shop occupiers. Some interwar flat developments incorporated just one or two shops as part of a predominantly residential complex in a suburban street; others allocated the entire ground floor to retail or other commercial purposes and the upper floor/s to residential flats. Located in retail districts and targeted at local workers, blocks of this latter type erected in the early 1920s were soundly constructed brick structures, but not as well-appointed or as generous with interior space and the number of rooms as the middle-class blocks located in principally residential areas (refer to Appendix 10).

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\(^{46}\) The lack of surviving building approvals for the Brisbane metropolitan area pre-1925 makes this press commentary particularly valuable. Research has confirmed the construction of 11 blocks of residential flats and 3 blocks combining residential flats and commercial premises, in the period 1921-1924 (refer to Appendix 10). This correlates well with the *Daily Mail* report, because it had included Gladstone Place in Fortitude Valley amongst the new residential flat developments, while in reality it was a conversion of an 1889 terrace row (BCC, building approval no.3820 (2 March 1920); *Brisbane Courier*, 22 January 1921, p10, 10 February 1921, p8; MWSSB, ‘Survey Field Book no.36C’, 1912 (updated 1919, 1924, 1949), fol.60; Watson and McKay, 1994, p91).


\(^{48}\) The shop-house is a very early form of urban dwelling transposed to the antipodes during the colonial era. The traditional nineteenth-century Brisbane shop-house comprised two-storesys, with retail or workshop space on the ground floor and residential accommodation above for the shop occupier and his or her family. The upper level usually was accessed internally from the shop below. Two adjacent, two-storied brick buildings of this type survive at Clarence Corner, Woolloongabba. Both date to the mid-1860s (QHR, ‘Pollock’s Shop House’, 600356).
One of the earliest of the flats-and-shops combinations was Duncan Flats, erected in Duncan Street, Fortitude Valley in 1922-1923 by Duncan Street Properties Ltd. The company was associated with T.C. Beirne, proprietor of the well-known T.C. Beirne & Co. department store in the Valley, and the flats were situated on the southern side of the street behind the department store. Duncan Flats was a substantial brick structure of three storeys, with the ground floor divided into 12 street-front retail or office spaces, and the upper floors occupied by small, self-contained flats each with a combined bedroom and living room, more akin to ‘bed-sits’. They were designed by the well-known architectural firm of Hennessy and Hennessy and F.R. Hall, a Sydney firm of which Hall was the resident Brisbane partner.49

While Brisbane was flirting with the idea of purpose-built flat buildings during the first half of the 1920s, detached housing remained the preferred option for the vast majority of Brisbane residents. One real estate agent even suggested it was a Queensland ‘trait’, and that Brisbane was not in the immediate future likely to follow Sydney or Melbourne in the ‘craze’ for flat developments.50 The overwhelming preference for detached housing in Brisbane’s burgeoning new suburbs obscured the emerging flat trend, and many contemporary commentators saw, or wished to promote, only the suburban sprawl:

The home-owner is numerous, and his ranks are being added to monthly. Estate owners, materials merchants, and builders unite in the effort to provide that individual home which, after all, is typical of the spirit and independence of the race. Here and there, it is true, ridiculous travesties of subdivided rooms and verandas masquerade as 'self-contained flats', but they are not in demand, and, for a city of its size, Brisbane has remarkably few modern apartment houses. The tendency is ever to expand, to move further and further afield, where one may obtain elbow room, and a run for the children, and space for a garden – Nature's greatest gift to man! There is every reason to believe that tendency will persist as the need for good roads and cheapened transport is recognised, and that the Brisbane of the near future will be a stately and beautiful city, renowned for the number and the delightfulness of its citizens' residences.51


50 Daily Mail, 30 December 1924, p10.

51 ‘Individual Or Community Dwellings’ in Sunday Mail, 19 October 1924, p13.
Modern flats popularised 1926-1929: the ‘cult of the flat’

From 1926, however, real estate agents were identifying a new trend in Brisbane: a noticeable demand (reputedly driven by ‘southerners’ moving to the city) for the well-appointed, purpose-built, ‘luxury’ flat. Few Brisbane agents knew how to cater for persons who demanded such a high standard of flat accommodation:

There has been a greater influx of what is known in the south as the city dweller, one agent declared, than Brisbane people may realise. Such people were flat dwellers in their natural element. Here they had to go to hotels or boarding-houses. Some, complainingly, took what is known in Brisbane as flats, but in Melbourne and Sydney would be known as furnished rooms, and these commanded a much lower rental than here.52

Brisbane developers were yet to show an interest in investing in the type of ‘luxury’ flat found in southern cities; the capital risk was considered too great, given the strong preference for detached housing. One agent, however, was prepared to predict a future for flats in Brisbane:

Brisbane had well passed the quarter million [in population], and would soon be pushing the half-million. The growth in the next 10 years would be much speedier than in the last 10 or any other period of Brisbane’s history, he believed, and with that would come the cult of the flat. That would mean much to the building trade.53

This predicted ‘cult of the flat’ emerged more rapidly than contemporary observers anticipated, hastened by the rapid abandonment of Victorian-era inner-suburban homes. Middle-class owner-occupiers and tenants alike were demanding more modern accommodation, including purpose-designed, well-appointed, inner-suburban flats, for which they were prepared to pay a substantial rent by Brisbane standards.54 There was an apparent correlation between the surge in flat developments from early in 1926, the peaking of new housing construction in that year (refer to Figure 5.1 above), and the introduction of new Council ordinances controlling the construction of purpose-built flats in mid-1926 (refer to Chapter 4). The residential construction sector was buoyant, demand was strong, and guidelines were in place to ensure that new flat buildings would meet sound construction standards, providing the conditions in which flat developers could invest with greater confidence.

53 Daily Mail, 5 January 1926, p12.
54 Brisbane Courier, 14 September 1926, p16.
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Modern flats popularised 1926-1929: the ‘cult of the flat’

In the period January 1926 to December 1929 the Greater Brisbane Council approved the construction of at least 42 blocks of purpose-built residential flats or combined commercial premises and flats (refer to Appendix 11) – an increase of over 260 per cent on the 17 flat developments known to have been erected in Brisbane in the years 1920 to 1925 (refer to Appendix 10). Some of these developments were still experimental, and were of greater diversity than in the early 1920s, reflecting a widening acceptance of the purpose-built flat across many levels of society.

In terms of distribution, flat developments of the mid- to late 1920s followed the pattern established by the house conversions from the 1910s (refer to Chapter 3), being concentrated in the inner suburbs of New Farm (with one-third of identified approvals), Fortitude Valley, Kangaroo Point, Spring Hill and the South Brisbane-West End-Hill End-Highgate Hill district. These were areas well-serviced by public transport and close to central city places of work and entertainment.

Some of Brisbane’s finest interwar flats were erected during this period. Principal amongst these was Craigston at Spring Hill, a brick and concrete high-rise of eight storeys and basement, constructed in 1927-1928 at a cost of around £36,000. Located on Wickham Terrace on the periphery of the Brisbane central business district, Craigston was the most prestigious and expensive of Brisbane’s purpose-built interwar flat buildings, and closest to the concept of inner-city high-rise ‘luxury’ flats. Designed in the new Spanish Mission style by the Brisbane architectural firm of H.W. Atkinson and A.H. Conrad, the complex combined medical suites on the ground floor with residential flats on the floors above. With the exception of the sixth level, which contained two flats, every other residential floor contained a single, well-appointed, generously sized flat with servant’s quarters.55 No other Brisbane interwar flat development was constructed to this number of storeys and very few rivalled the generosity of interior space per flat.56

55 ABJQ, 10 December 1926, pp46, 74, 10 February 1928, p12; BCC, building approval no.11,965 (7 October 1926); Brisbane Courier, 14 December 1926, p8, 4 January 1927, p8, 2 April 1927, p14, 28 June 1927, p7, 11 October 1927, p8, 31 January 1928, p17; QHR, ‘Craigston’ (600165).
56 Two other high-rise blocks of flats were proposed for Brisbane in the 1930s, but neither came to fruition. One was Tendring, an eight-storey block planned in 1934 for the corner of Berry Street and Wickham Terrace in Spring Hill, a few doors from Craigston. The other was a flat development of seven storeys at Hillside Crescent, Hamilton, proposed in 1936. (ABJQ, 10 April 1934, p23, September 1936, p18; BCC, building approval no.32,004 (9 September 1936); BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1933-June, p401 (155/1934), 1936-June 1937, p191 (435/1936-37), 1936-1937, p243

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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.140
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Modern flats popularised 1926-1929: the ‘cult of the flat’

The project was commissioned by Craigston Ltd, a syndicate of Brisbane professionals (mainly medical practitioners), and businessman Lance Jones. It was inspired by the success of the Astor Flats in central Sydney, completed in 1923 and funded on the co-operative ownership model developed in the United States. In the absence of the availability of strata title, Craigston Ltd owned the Wickham Terrace site and the building, and the shares in the syndicate held by each member entitled them to the tenure of one of the flats. Sale or letting of a flat was permitted, but new owners and tenants were subject to the approval of the other members of the syndicate.

As reported in the press in late 1926:

Its [the syndicate’s] objects will not be the acquisition of profits, but the providing of a home for the shareholder concerned. Each block of shares will entitle the shareholder to the tenancy of a definite floor or area; thus security of tenure will be provided. Management will be vested in the shareholders, who will have a voice in everything that is done in relation to expenditure and management of the building. Levies will be made from time to time to cover the cost of such items as rates and taxes, insurance, etc.

Craigston was unique in Brisbane in that it was not intended as a profit-making venture; rather, the concept was designed to meet the specific needs of a group of like-minded affluent individuals. The co-operative ownership model that they chose provided a means of pooling resources to create modern, convenient and comfortable homes near their places of work, but did not inspire a burst of similar developments. The majority of blocks of flats erected in Brisbane in the interwar years were financial investments, intended to return a profit to the owner.

Fig. 5.3 Sketch of proposed Craigston Flats, Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, 1926. (ABJG, 10 December 1926, p46.)
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Modern flats popularised 1926-1929: the ‘cult of the flat’

Another of the more interesting experiments in residential flat buildings during this period was Avalon (1929) at New Farm, a two-storeyed brick complex containing 26 one and two-bedroom flats, 2 shops and an attached garage, constructed at a cost of £15,000. It was designed in a picturesque style by architects T.R. Hall and G.G. Prentice, and contained the greatest number of flats in any single interwar flat development in Brisbane.\(^\text{59}\) Although reasonably well-appointed and pleasantly finished, the flats were modest in size. Located on the Brunswick Street tram line, they were popular with visitors to Brisbane, particularly women and their families visiting from the southern states or from regional centres and pastoral stations in Queensland, and the comings and goings of the more prominent tenants were reported regularly in the social columns of the daily newspapers.\(^\text{60}\)

Good-quality blocks of flats targeted at the high end of the rental market remained popular. Most were of brick construction, two or three storeys in height, containing on average four or six flats. Foxthorn Court (1926, £5,400) and Hampton Court (1927, £6,000) at New Farm established benchmarks for this type of residential flat building. Both were well-designed and well-appointed three-storeyed brick buildings, containing 6 two-bedroom flats, two on each level, and were designed to attract long-term tenants. Both were located in quiet, suburban streets full of detached housing on garden allotments, and being comparatively low-scale developments with attractive exteriors, contributed to the visual amenity of the suburb.\(^\text{61}\)

Complexes combining suburban shops and flats continued to prove a popular form of investment throughout metropolitan Brisbane during the second half of the 1920s, with a wider distribution than the residential blocks, which remained heavily clustered in the inner suburbs (refer to Appendix 13).

\(^{59}\) The closest rival to Avalon in terms of number of flats in a single development was Oxley Court Flats, built in 1938-1939 on North Quay, with 21 one- and two-bedroom flats (BCC, building approval no.37,723 (29 April 1938); Courier-Mail, 22 April 1939, p125).

\(^{60}\) BCC, building approval no.18,841 (17 May 1929); Brisbane Courier, 2 November 1929, p6 and 14 December 1929, p5; Ricardo Felipe (ed), Avalon. Art & Life of an Apartment Building, Brisbane: Museum of Brisbane and Vanity Publishing, 2005; Phillips Smith Conwell Architects Archive: Job no. 905, Tube 57 Roll 3 (4 plans, May 1929 – Hall & Prentice); Telegraph, 1 February 1930, p20.

\(^{61}\) BCC, building approval nos.7,037 (8 March 1926) and 13,337 (2 August 1927); Brisbane Courier, 11 August 1926, p20, 30 January 1928, p22, 21 November 1928, p9; Daily Mail, 16 March 1926, p16, 24 August 1926, p16, 3 September 1926, p10; Sunday Mail, 22 January 1928, p21.
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Modern flats popularised 1926-1929: the ‘cult of the flat’

With the success of the middle-class blocks, small investors began to enter the market with the construction of less expensive structures, targeted at tenants on average incomes rather than at the high end of the rental market. Purpose-built flats were now becoming available to a wider range of tenants, but rarely were these buildings as well-designed or appointed as the middle-class blocks. Maisonettes and small-scale timber and fibrous-cement flat buildings of two or three flats, usually costing well under £1,500, also began to appear in the inner suburbs (refer to Appendix 13).

The popularity of flat developments in Brisbane expanded during the second half of the 1920s despite industrial unrest in the Queensland building trades in the early months of 1927 and a tightening of the investment money market as the Queensland economy began to slow from the second half of 1928. Commentators interpreted the economic slump as temporary, citing as cause for optimism the sustained re-building programme of southern-based financial institutions in Brisbane. What they failed to identify was that these institutions were taking advantage of reduced labour and materials costs in Brisbane as the recession deepened and competition for contracts increased.62

A number of inner-city buildings of this period incorporated a caretaker’s flat in the design (refer to Appendix 12). No doubt the noisiest would have been the caretaker’s residence at the new Brisbane City Hall (completed in 1930), located on the upper level ‘under the shadow of the clock tower’. At the State Government Insurance Office building (1933) at the corner of Adelaide and Edward streets, the caretaker and his family resided in a five-roomed, roof-top bungalow with ‘spacious lounge, tastefully furnished bedrooms, and a bathroom and kitchen that are the last word in domestic equipment’, and the caretaker of the Colonial Mutual Life tower (1931), next to the General Post Office, enjoyed a ‘roof-top garden with bush-house, fish pond and aviaries’.63

62 Building, 12 April 1927, pp153, 155, 12 March 1928, p153; Brisbane Courier, 3 January 1928, p9, 12 June 1928, p7; see also Brisbane Courier, 16 October 1928, p11 and 16 April 1929, p7.
Construction hiatus 1930-1931

Queensland’s economic slump of the late 1920s merged into a world-wide economic depression in 1930. The construction industry was one of the hardest hit sectors of the economy, with residential construction plummeting. Purpose-built flat construction virtually ceased, with only three applications for flat buildings approved by Council during 1930 and none identified in 1931 (refer to Appendix 10). Of the 1930 approvals, two were for substantial blocks of brick flats in New Farm: Ravenswood and Hamel. The third was for a modest set of shops and flats in Windsor, which did not progress.

Ravenswood Flats, fronting Bowen Terrace, is of particular note. Designed by architect J.P. Donoghue, the three-storeyed brick building contained six well-appointed residential flats (two on each level), and was considered one of the most luxurious blocks of flats erected in Brisbane during the interwar period, with no hint of depression austerity in its materials, appointments, or the comfortable size of the flats. Costing an estimated £4,500 to construct, the owner-builder, Mr Harry Crouch, may have taken advantage of the lower cost of materials and labour in 1930. Each flat contained two bedrooms, living room, breakfast room, kitchen, bathroom and sleep-out verandah and was provided with built-in bathroom and kitchen fittings, hot water, electric refrigerator, rubbish duct to an incinerator in the basement, and telephone. The flats were described as ‘planned on a scale which, though fairly common in the South, is comparatively new to Brisbane.’

Ravenswood was the first of four blocks of ‘luxury’ brick flats that Mr Crouch anticipated erecting on a site extending between Bowen Terrace and Moray Street (the site of an earlier Ravenswood, an 1860 residence). Two blocks were to front each street, and were to share a central courtyard with gardens, garages, and a grass tennis court lit by electricity. In October 1930, when Ravenswood Flats was nearing completion, Harry Crouch was still intending to erect the Moray Street blocks, but had sold the remaining land fronting Bowen Terrace. The project became a casualty of the depressed economic conditions and although the two Moray Street blocks of flats eventuated in 1933-1934, only one was constructed by Mr Crouch.

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64 ABJQ, 10 February 1930, p61, 10 March 1930, p38, 10 April 1930, p58; BCC, building approval no. 21046 (15 March 1930); Brisbane Courier, 18 February 1930, p3, 25 February 1930, p11, 4 March 1930, p3, 11 March 1930, p3, 18 March 1930, p3, 25 March 1930, p18, 1 April 1930, p9, 14 October 1930, p3.
65 ABJQ, 10 March 1930, p38; Brisbane Courier, 14 October 1930, p3.
Chapter 5: Modern house or modern flat?
Investment pathfinders 1932-1933

Investment pathfinders 1932-1933

From August 1932 a small resurgence in applications for the construction of new flats in Brisbane was an encouraging sign for the building industry:

One of the results of the depression in the building industry was the almost total cessation of the building of flats – an activity in the ‘peak' years that afforded much employment. Is the resumption of flat-building a sign of returning prosperity in the trade?66

Purpose-built flats were in the vanguard of the revival in Brisbane residential construction, with Council approval granted for at least 23 blocks of new residential flats during 1933 (refer to Appendix 11). So noticeable was this activity that contemporary commentators began to refer to a flat building ‘boom’ and some believed (erroneously as it proved) that supply soon would out-strip demand.67 In seeking to explain why flats were proving so popular at a time of still depressed economic conditions, commentators cited a number of factors, including a demand for new modern flats generated by an ‘influx' of ‘flat-educated' southern businessmen; the attractions of purpose-built flats (lack of garden to maintain, convenient arrangement of rooms, labour-saving devices not normally found in rental properties, sewerage or septic system, garage accommodation); and the economic advantages to property owners – a block of flats was cheaper to construct and required less expenditure on rates, insurances and maintenance than the equivalent number of detached rental dwellings.68

Some of Brisbane’s most substantial flat developments were constructed at this period, including Elystan Court (1932, £4,000), Coronet (1933, £9,000), Glenster Court (later Casa del Rio, 1933-1934, £4,200) and Casa del Mar (1933-1934, £6,000) at New Farm; Rockmount (1933, £4,600) at South Brisbane; and Carrington (1933-1934, £3,000) at Spring Hill (refer to Appendix 13). Coronet Flats, with its substantial and imposing form and distinctive façade, was sited to take advantage of a corner position at the intersection of Brunswick Street and Elystan Road opposite New Farm Park, and remains a New Farm landmark and an iconic representation of the interwar flat trend (this building is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10).

67 Brisbane Courier, 28 July 1933, p3; Courier-Mail, 10 August 1934, p21.
68 Brisbane Courier, 17 March 1933, p7, 28 July 1933, p3.
Flat building ‘boom’ 1934-1938

In mid-1934 the City Architect, H.A. Erwood, announced the welcome news that Brisbane was participating in a national revival in the construction industry, with building activity in the city almost double that of mid-1933. There had been a pronounced increase in the number of building approvals for dwellings, but also a striking new trend toward flat developments:

The most important change in the trend of home building, however, was the great increase in the building of flats. At present 12 big modern blocks of flats were either being built or were to be built shortly in Brisbane suburbs. 69

More property commentators were referring to a flat construction ‘boom’, which, despite initial predictions in 1933 that the market would be oversupplied, continued unabated through 1934. The Courier-Mail reported in August that in addition to the sustained demand for rental residential accommodation generated by the long-term housing shortage and the diminution of residential construction in 1930-1932, there was now a strong demand by tenants for better-class flats. As the economy revived, job-security firmed and wages stabilised, the attractions of modern flat-living were proving increasingly attainable, and tenants were rejecting the makeshift house conversions.

Purpose-built flats offered tenants conveniences rarely found in the average older Brisbane house, and an opportunity to participate in a lifestyle generally available only in the most expensive of new middle-class housing. Modern flats were demonstrating high occupancy rates and returning handsome profits on investment capital (reputedly up to 17 per cent), particularly when compared with the small returns being offered on other capital investments such as government securities and fixed deposits with financial institutions. As the Courier-Mail reported in August 1934:

More and more the public is demanding a higher standard of comfort than is afforded by old houses, and it may not be convenient for house-hunters to build. The solution of their problem is to be found in small, compact flats, fitted with all kinds of labour-saving devices. In Brisbane they are prepared, without demur, to pay £2, £2/2, £2/5 or £2/10 a week for unfurnished flats that provide ‘service’ and that are conveniently situated in relation to the city. ... Far from believing that flat-building has been over-done in Brisbane, architects believe that so far only the fringe of it has been touched upon. 70

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70 ‘Boom’ In Modern Flats. House Shortage In Brisbane’ in Courier-Mail, 10 August 1934, p21.
A combination of economic factors had contributed to the revival in the property market and construction industry in 1934, including greater investor confidence; lower interest rates; need for an outlet for idle capital; comparatively low costs of materials and labour; reduced cost of land; and the shortage of houses. These were as significant in stimulating the escalating flat building activity as was the demand to rent more modern accommodation. Reviewing building activity in Brisbane during 1934, the Courier-Mail reiterated the importance of flat developments in the revival of the construction sector:

Those who saw possibilities in domestic building as a means of securing an adequate return on capital avoided ordinary houses and concentrated on the erection of flats. So fast was the pace of flat-building that sceptics declared that Brisbane would be over-built for a decade at least. The experience, so far, has not borne out the truth of that gloomy prophecy, for architects and real estate agents give the assurance that a modern block of flats will return from 8 to 10 per cent on capital. Few modern flats are unoccupied; the pinch has been felt by owners of old types of flats – 'converted' old residences in particular. The modern flat is a solid structure, built of brick and concrete and roofed with tiles, and it provides, in some cases, services such as central refrigeration and heating. Factors contributing to the demand for flats, architects say, are the reduced sizes of families, the cost of domestic help, and their convenient position in relation to the city and places of employment.71

New Farm and Fortitude Valley, close to the Brisbane central business district and adequately serviced by a tramline network, remained the favoured areas for new flat developments, but purpose-built flats were now appearing throughout the inner suburbs, especially at Spring Hill and South Brisbane. Hamilton also was attracting its share of modern flats (refer to Appendix 13).

In retrospect, if 1934 was categorised as a ‘boom’ year in flat construction, 1935 would have to be viewed as an ‘explosion’. The popularity of purpose-built flats as an investment escalated through 1935, as did tenant demand for good quality flats to rent:

... Many choice areas had recently been sold, and on these modern flats were being erected, and they were snapped up immediately they were ready for occupation and often long before. ... Even where old homes were converted into flats, agents did not find it easy to obtain tenants for them in competition with the present day flats.72

71 ‘Promise of Normal Prosperity in Coming Year. Building Interests Heartened By Experience of 1934’ in Courier-Mail, 1 January 1935, p3.
72 ‘Demand for Building Sites Shows Improvement’ in Courier-Mail, 17 December 1935, p5.
Along with the revival in house construction generally, in the first six months of 1935 the Brisbane City Council approved the highest number of modern flat developments for any equivalent period to that date:

Notable in the operations over the half year has been the continued activity in flat-building, approval having been given to 27 plans. ... Flats are being regarded by investors as good propositions, and they are heartened to expend considerable sums of money on buildings much in advance of Brisbane's old conceptions of what flats should be.\(^73\)

Unfortunately, any record of building approvals issued by the Brisbane City Council during the period September 1934 to January 1936 inclusive is missing from Council archives. From other contemporary sources such as newspapers, journals and postal directories, however, many of the more substantial blocks of flats constructed during this period have been identified (refer to Appendix 13).

By 1936 a gently rising real estate market bearing none of the danger signs of a ‘boom’ was revitalising confidence in the economy. Investors were attracted to real estate, especially good sites for purpose-built flat buildings, which continued to return higher yields on capital than other forms of investment.\(^74\) While financial institutions were cautious in their attitudes to flat developments – uncertain whether purpose-built flats were ‘a permanency or merely a passing phase’ – the Real Estate Institute of Queensland optimistically promoted self-contained flats as ‘a definite progressive result of modern life’. While admitting that in the past, financiers in the United States, Canada, and in Sydney and Melbourne had been ‘burnt’ in the over-financing of flats, Brisbane realty agents considered the construction of purpose-built flats in their city an excellent investment opportunity:

‘Modern flats are definitely here to stay. ... Flats as an investment would still be good if rents came down even by one-third of present rates. ... A good set of self-contained flats is probably one of the best investments in Queensland to-day. Therefore, any apprehensions that they are merely a passing phase is groundless. Rather will they tend to increase, and it is not hard to visualise the day when Spring Hill is covered with modern workmen's flats in place of the poverty-stricken wooden houses that serve all the purposes of flats, without half their comfort or conveniences.’\(^75\)

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\(^73\) *Courier-Mail*, 9 July 1935, p6.

\(^74\) *Courier-Mail*, 3 March 1936, p21.

\(^75\) ‘Flats As Good Investments Opinion of Real Estate Institute’ in *Courier-Mail*, 30 June 1936, p5.
In April 1936 the *Courier-Mail* compared the Brisbane flat-building boom to a similar boom in Melbourne reputedly driven more by investors speculating 'on their ability to stimulate and sustain a flat fashion' than by a genuine reaction to public demand.\(^{76}\) Such comment did little to boost the confidence of financial institutions in the viability of flat developments in Brisbane and some constriction in flat building finance was being felt in Brisbane by mid-1937.\(^{77}\)

Despite the difficulties in procuring finance for flat developments, dozens of blocks of flats of varying degrees of substance and quality and offering a range of facilities were erected in Brisbane in the period 1936 to 1938. The bulk of the more substantial blocks were constructed of brick and comprised between four and eight flats (refer to Appendix 13).

During the second half of the 1930s two- and three -storeyed, purpose-built flat developments became an integral feature of Brisbane’s inner-suburban landscape. In general the local press tended to support the flat trend and regularly published articles in their real estate and construction columns emphasising the advantages of flat-living, or the opportunities to be made in flats as investments, or highlighting the quality of architect-designed and well-constructed blocks of flats.

In August 1937, for example, the *Courier-Mail* published an article from the July 1937 edition of *Constructional Review*, arguing that modern, purpose-built flats had a definite place in the community. While admitting that in some quarters the pervasiveness of this new form of residential accommodation was cause for concern, with critics arguing that flats and the flat lifestyle promoted urban transience, a falling birth-rate and the creation of slums, the writer outlined a number of advantages provided by flats. For those seeking temporary accommodation they offered ‘a more desirable alternative than an existence in a hotel or boarding-house’. For the housewife, the labour-saving devices in a modern flat offered ‘more freedom’ as well as compensation for the higher rental. In addition, without the burden of a suburban garden to maintain, flat-dwellers could enjoy greater recreation time.\(^{78}\)

\(^{76}\) *Courier-Mail*, 6 April 1934, p4.
\(^{77}\) ABJQ, June 1937, p9.
\(^{78}\) ‘The Significance of Flats. Their Place in the Community’ in *Courier-Mail*, 10 August 1937, p18.
Curtailing larger flat developments in the late 1930s

Despite the popularity of new flat developments both as investments and as a lifestyle choice, financial institutions, always wary of the flat movement and fearing a market over-supply, were prompted in late 1938 to curtail lending for purpose-built flats. Architect J.V.D. Coutts, editor of the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, campaigned vigorously for the lifting of constrictions on flat finance:

Finance for flat construction is practically unprocurable. ... In Sydney eight-storey blocks of flats are in progress, and it is astonishing to think that not one bank or insurance company in Brisbane is willing to advance finance for the erection of flats. The fact that these financial institutions suffered severely during the depression in Sydney and Melbourne, in similar types of construction, does not surely justify the attitude they are adopting in Brisbane! The returns from flats are very much greater than from any domestic buildings, and consequently, such attitude is causing surprise in building circles.79

Despite arguments such as the above, financial institutions continued to boycott flat developments through 1939 with the result that Brisbane’s daily press ceased to promote flat construction and the flat lifestyle. With finance for detached housing construction remaining readily available, the focus of the Courier-Mail’s real estate and construction pages through 1939 resided in the promotion of the Queensland home: home-building, home-ownership, home-design, home-decorating and home-furnishing.

Site approvals granted for new flat developments during 1939 were mostly for maisonettes and small-scale flat developments, confirming that the ‘boom’ in the construction of larger-scale blocks of flats had ended.

From surviving Council records and other contemporary sources it is possible to gain some indication of the rapid rise in the popularity of maisonettes and pairs of flats during the second half of the 1930s, although it has not been possible to calculate precise statistics. In the period January–August 1934 (records do not exist for the remainder of 1934 or for 1935) only two pairs of maisonettes were approved for construction in Brisbane. No pairs of flats were recorded, although a couple of approvals may have been for no more than two flats. In 1939, of all the site approvals

79 ‘Editorial’ in ABJQ, October 1938, p9; see also ‘Good Demand Likely For New Homes. Lack Of Interest In Flats Deplored’ in Courier-Mail, 24 January 1939, p18.
granted for flats and maisonettes (no building approvals survive), approximately 68 per cent were for maisonettes or pairs of flats. They were discouraged in the newer suburbs (such as Ashgrove, Camp Hill and St Lucia) but had a greater chance of being approved in older inner and closer suburbs.  

**Impact of war, early 1940s**

There was a brief revival in larger-scale flat developments during 1940-1941, but the small-scale developments remained overwhelmingly the more popular form of investment, appealing to the mum-and-dad investors of the day and to small-scale builder-developers. The larger blocks demonstrated a wider diversity of location than in previous years, with some erected as far afield as Coorparoo and Windsor (refer to Appendix 13).

From 1941 Australia entered a war economy, with materials and labour diverted from larger domestic construction projects to infrastructure in support of the allied defence of the Pacific region. Under the National Security (Building Control) Regulations gazetted on and in force from 11 June 1941 (refer to Appendix 9 for the key provisions), domestic construction projects costing over £3,000 were curtailed. The regulations effectively prohibited the erection of larger flat projects, although the Federal Treasurer could exercise discretionary approval if the project was deemed necessary. The Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland reported that the Federal Treasurer had approved some flat developments in Sydney costing above £3,000, but these were mainly for the provision of working-class flats; ‘luxury’ flat buildings being ‘disapproved’.

Approval has been given for several small and medium blocks of flats costing over £3000 where the rents of the individual dwellings in each block vary from 35/- to 45/- weekly, but there has been disapproval of blocks of flats where the average rental would be from £3 to £5 weekly. There has also been disapproval of requests for permission to demolish existing dwellings with a considerable useful life, in order to erect blocks of flats on the site.  

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80 BCC, Registers of Building Approvals, January-August 1934 and January-December 1939.

Distinguishing between maisonettes (a twin house) and a building containing two flats or a ‘pair of flats’ in recorded building and site approvals is virtually impossible: owners, contractors and architects used these terms interchangeably during the interwar period.

81 ABJQ, July 1941, p16.
In January 1942 further regulations issued under the national security provisions limited the number of flats in new buildings to two unless the consent of the Federal Treasurer was obtained. In addition, building permits granted under the building control regulations introduced in June 1941 now had a currency of only six months, applied retrospectively. The January 1942 regulation effectively ended investment in better-quality, larger blocks of purpose-built flats in Brisbane, with investors turning to the construction of maisonettes or pairs of flats.

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82 ABJQ, February 1942, p16.
Conclusion

By 1939 Brisbane had become a highly suburbanised, structural city, with vast acres of new residential subdivisions radiating from the city centre via a network of tramlines, railways and roads. The new suburbs were filled with modern detached housing occupied primarily by young couples strongly optimistic that life in a garden suburb would provide a sound foundation for family life. Yet within this dominant suburban model there existed space for a distinctly different type of residential accommodation, one that generated a mode of living eschewing week-end gardens, families of more than one or two young children, and lengthy daily commuting to places of work.

Purpose-designed, purpose-built blocks of small, compact flats located in the inner suburbs and clustered along the key public transport routes in the closer suburbs, had found favour with investors and tenants alike. Initial progress toward their acceptance was retarded by the problems associated with houses being converted into flats, but their popularity had gained momentum during the second half of the 1920s and in the post-depression era the erection of purpose-built blocks of flats led the way in the revival of residential construction in Brisbane. The well-documented ‘boom’ in new flat buildings between 1934 and 1938 was curtailed only by a tight money market in 1939 and from mid-1941 by the wartime economy.

The interwar evolution of Brisbane’s purpose-built flat buildings from unusual experiments to a culturally acceptable and widely-adopted form of residential accommodation reflected the dominant demographic, social, cultural, economic and political paradigms affecting life in Brisbane between the wars. Beyond this, they were a reflection of community aspirations to embrace modernity in all its forms.

Flat buildings never challenged the dominance of the detached house on its garden allotment, but by the end of the interwar period had proven to be popular alternatives.
Growth, distribution and the creation of ‘flat colonies’
Chapter 6: Growth, distribution, and the creation of ‘flat colonies’

Contemporary observers of the interwar period commented on the proliferation of flat buildings (of all types) in Brisbane’s inner suburbs, which they saw as producing significant changes in the streetscapes. They wrote about ‘the flat fashion’, ‘flat colonies’ and ‘armies of flat-dwellers’ in the suburbs closest to the city centre, and along the tramlines. But how accurate was the perception that flats and flat-dwellers were congregated in particular areas of Brisbane, or that flat-living had taken such a rapid hold in the city? Was this illusion or reality?

To assess the validity of contemporary perceptions about the growth of flats, and to identify the pattern of flat distribution within the metropolitan area, the first section of this chapter examines the spatial and statistical dimensions of the flat trend through an analysis of census data from 1911 to 1933.

In a subsequent section dealing with ‘flat colonies’, the figures cited in relation to purpose-built flats are based on research derived from the following key sources: Brisbane City Council archives (including registers of Council building approvals, reports and proceedings of Council meetings, Health Department licensing files for multiple-dwelling buildings, and the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board’s survey field books); building reports and tender notices in contemporary daily newspapers (*Brisbane Courier, Daily Mail, Courier-Mail, Sunday Mail, Telegraph*); and similar reports in trade journals of the period (*Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, Building*). Information collated from these sources provides a very strong indication of the expansion, nature and distribution of new flat-building activity in Brisbane between 1921 and 1941.
Chapter 6: Growth, distribution, and the creation of ‘flat colonies’
Quantifying the flat phenomenon

Quantifying the flat phenomenon

At the time of the national census conducted on 3 April 1911, flats had yet to make an impact on the modes of residence of the Brisbane metropolitan population. Queensland’s economy was agriculture-based and decentralised, with the capital in the south-east corner of state supporting only 23 per cent of the population (139,480 persons).\(^1\) The metropolitan population was accommodated in 27,532 occupied dwellings,\(^2\) of which nearly 97 per cent (26,645) were ‘private dwellings’, which included private houses (26,220) and tenements in private houses (425).\(^3\) If a self-contained flat existed in Brisbane in 1911, it was classified as a ‘tenement in a private house’.

In 1911 tenements in private houses constituted a tiny 1.6 per cent of occupied private dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area, and self-contained flats would have comprised a very small portion of this figure.\(^4\) As Table 6.1 below illustrates, the percentage of occupied tenements in private houses was low in all Australian capital cities at this period, the national metropolitan average being 1.62 per cent. Australia had yet to embrace flat-living on any significant scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupied private dwellings</th>
<th>Sydney</th>
<th>Melbourne</th>
<th>Brisbane</th>
<th>Adelaide</th>
<th>Perth</th>
<th>Hobart</th>
<th>Metropolitan average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private houses</td>
<td>98.48</td>
<td>98.82</td>
<td>98.40</td>
<td>97.83</td>
<td>98.60</td>
<td>98.16</td>
<td>98.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenements in private houses</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the other metropolitan areas, Brisbane contained more occupied boarding houses, lodging houses and coffee palaces\(^6\) than tenements in private houses.\(^7\)

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1 This was a substantially smaller proportion of the population than Adelaide (46.42), Melbourne (44.77), Sydney (38.23) or Perth (37.85) and only slightly higher than Hobart (20.89) (Census 3 April 1911, Vol.I, p112).
3 Similarly high proportions of private to non-private dwellings were found in all the Australian metropolitan areas in 1911: Sydney 96.2; Melbourne 96.2; Adelaide 97.5; Perth 96.5; Hobart 95.7 (based on Census 3 April 1911, Vol.III, Part XIII, p1963).
4 As the published census data made no distinction between self-contained flats and non-self-contained tenements, nor between purpose-built flats and house conversions, no further refinement of this statistic is possible.
6 A coffee palace was an unlicensed hotel or large refreshment place serving coffee and other non-alcoholic beverages. The expression entered British parlance around the 1880s (Macquarie Dictionary, p428).
Although not recorded in the census reports, it is probable that there were also more occupants of boarding houses, etc., than of tenements in private houses.

The inference can be drawn that in 1911, for those for whom a private house was neither desirable nor achievable, flats were not the preferred, or even a generally available, form of residential accommodation in Brisbane or in other Australian metropolitan areas.

Within a decade, however, there was a perceptible and sustained change in the nature of residential accommodation in Australian metropolitan areas. As noted by the Commonwealth Statistician following the census of 4 April 1921, Queenslanders were inhabiting more multiple-occupancy dwellings:

The most striking disclosure from the analysis of dwellings according to their nature is the extension of the use of the tenement or flat, and of the boarding-house, lodging-house, or coffee palace as a place of residence. The figures not only confirm what has been a subject of general observation for some time past, but they provide authentic data by which the extent of the movement can be measured. Thus during the ten years between the Censuses of 1911 and 1921 the number of private houses increased by 24.64 per cent – from 121,062 to 150,886, while the tenements and flats increased by 251 per cent – from 691 to 2427, and the number of boarding-houses, etc, increased by 93 per cent* – from 1,400 to 2,703. Of the 2,427 tenements and flats in Queensland at the 1921 Census, 1,087, or 44.79 per cent, were in the Metropolitan Area; 645, or 26.58 per cent, were in the Urban Provincial Areas; and 695, or 28.63 per cent, were in the Rural Districts.8

* This increase is partially due to more precise classification of boarding-houses at the later Census.

A clear indication of the rising popularity of self-contained flats in Australia urban areas at this period was the shift in how they were recorded for census purposes: from ‘tenement in private dwelling’ in 1911 to ‘tenement or flat’ in 1921. While still grouped together for statistical purposes, the change in classification reflected increasing community familiarity with, and an accepted distinction between, self-contained flats and non-self-contained tenements.

8 Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p4.
In 1921, metropolitan Brisbane comprised an area of 210.55 square miles (54,532.2 hectares) with a population of 209,946 (an increase of just over 50 per cent since 1911) and an average density of 1.56 persons per acre. The populations of all Australian metropolitan areas had risen significantly between the national censuses of 1911 and 1921, despite the impact of the Great War of 1914-1918, but Brisbane had experienced the greatest proportional population increase.\(^9\) To accommodate this growth the number of occupied private houses in the Brisbane metropolitan area increased by just over 57 per cent, and occupied tenements and flats by 156 per cent (from 425 to 1087).\(^10\)

Despite the significant numerical increase, at 2.57 per cent of occupied private dwellings, the proportion of flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1921 remained marginal compared with private houses. Further, the rising number of persons living in multiple-occupancy buildings was not confined to flats and tenements. In 1921 the number of boarding houses, lodging houses and coffee palaces (1,197) still exceeded the number of flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area (1,087).\(^11\)

By 1933, however, the trend for living in flats and tenements had been established in Brisbane with a clear mandate for future growth. Sustained strong population growth during the 1920s\(^12\) maintained pressure for the provision of additional residential accommodation. Between 1921 and 1933 the number of occupied private houses in the Brisbane metropolitan area rose from 41,291 to 64,118 – an increase of just over 55 per cent. At the same time the number of tenements and flats rose from 1,087 to 3,785 – an increase of approximately 248 per cent.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.2, p3.
This Bulletin gives the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area as 210,032, which is slightly higher than the figure of 209,946 appearing in other 1921 census reports. The difference is minimal and produces little distortion in the population density per acre.


\(^11\) Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.21, p9.

\(^12\) In the 12-year period 1921 to 1933 the Brisbane metropolitan population rose from 209,946 to 299,748, an increase of 89,802 or 42.78 per cent (based on Census 30 June 1933, Bulletin No.19, p3).

The Brisbane metropolitan area retained its dominance in flats and tenements with 59.05 per cent of the Queensland total in 1933 (Census 30 June 1933, Bulletin No.19, p5).
As illustrated in Table 6.2 below, Brisbane flats and tenements comprised 5.57 per cent of all occupied private dwellings in 1933. Compared with 2.57 per cent in 1921 and 1.6 per cent in 1911, the growing popularity of the flat or tenement in Brisbane was evident, sustained, and rising. By the time of the next national census in 1947 (well outside the study period), flats and tenements constituted over 11 per cent of occupied private dwellings in the metropolitan area, reflecting the ‘boom’ in flat construction during the second half of the 1930s and early 1940s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupied Private Dwellings</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1947</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Houses (including Shares in Private Houses)</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>97.43</td>
<td>94.43</td>
<td>88.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenements and Flats</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.2 Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Percentage of Occupied Private Dwellings according to Nature, 1911-1947.**

**Distribution: statistical data 1911-1933**

Contemporary impressions that flats and tenements were located principally in Brisbane’s inner suburbs are confirmed by the census data, which reveals this distribution pattern emerging in the 1910s. Given that the earliest flats in Brisbane took the form of older houses being converted into flats, and that these houses were concentrated in the inner suburbs, the pattern is not unexpected. During the 1920s, when purpose-built flats became popular investments and fashionable places of residence (refer to Chapter 5), developers of new flat buildings initially followed the established pattern, concentrating their activity in the inner suburbs close to the city centre, before gradually expanding into other suburbs along public transport routes.

Limitations in the census data preclude identifying which Brisbane suburbs contained the majority of flats or tenements in 1911. However, population densities may be an indication (refer to Table 6.3 below). Highest densities were recorded in the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, with 11.34 and 10.43 persons per acre respectively. The closely-settled towns of Ithaca, Hamilton, Toowong and Windsor, serviced by public transport routes.

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15 The 1911 census reports provide data on population density, number of occupied dwellings and average number of inmates per occupied dwelling, according to each Brisbane metropolitan local government area. No distinction is made between private and non-private dwellings, or between private houses and tenements in private houses.
transportation and within easy reach of the city centre, had population densities of between 2.18 and 5.47 persons per acre, reflecting the residential subdivision of earlier, larger estates since the 1880s. The outer suburbs were still rural or semi-rural, with densities as low as 0.02 persons per acre in those parts of Pine and Tingalpa shires included within the Brisbane metropolitan area.

The difficulty with using population density as an indication of the presence of flats is that the statistics included ‘other than private dwellings’ such as boarding schools, nurses’ hostels, military and police barracks, and charitable institutions such as refuges and homes. The presence of a number of such places in the City of Brisbane may account for its slightly higher occupancy rate of 6.25 persons per occupied dwelling, compared with the average 5.07 persons in the Brisbane metropolitan area as a whole.

### Table 6.3 Brisbane metropolitan area: Population density, density of occupied dwellings, and number of persons per occupied dwelling in each local government area, as at 3 April 1911.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Persons per acre</th>
<th>No. occupied dwellings</th>
<th>Occupied dwellings per acre</th>
<th>Persons per occupied dwelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balmoral Shire</td>
<td>15360</td>
<td>3847</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont Shire*</td>
<td>17280</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane City</td>
<td>3520</td>
<td>39917</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>6384</td>
<td>1.814</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane, South, City</td>
<td>2880</td>
<td>30051</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>6916</td>
<td>2.401</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coorparoo Shire</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>2804</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoggera Shire*</td>
<td>26240</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Town</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4905</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indooroopilly Shire*</td>
<td>35200</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithaca Town</td>
<td>2880</td>
<td>15756</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>3206</td>
<td>1.113</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidron Shire*</td>
<td>27520</td>
<td>3663</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Shire*</td>
<td>151680</td>
<td>2631</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandgate Town*</td>
<td>3840</td>
<td>3051</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Shire*</td>
<td>12800</td>
<td>3325</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>0.031</td>
<td>8.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephens Shire</td>
<td>5760</td>
<td>5415</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1165</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taringa Shire</td>
<td>3520</td>
<td>2963</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingalpa Shire*</td>
<td>76800</td>
<td>1262</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>4.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toombul Shire</td>
<td>17920</td>
<td>6791</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toowong Town</td>
<td>2880</td>
<td>6286</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor Town</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>8970</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnnum Shire*</td>
<td>3840</td>
<td>3221</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeerongpilly Shire*</td>
<td>112000</td>
<td>1313</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total metropolitan areas</strong></td>
<td><strong>199369</strong></td>
<td><strong>139480</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>27532</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.138</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.07</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB Part only of these local government areas and their statistics are included in the Brisbane metropolitan area.

By 1921 the trend for flat- and tenement-dwelling in inner-city/inner-suburban Brisbane had become a noticeable phenomenon. The number of flats and tenements in each metropolitan local government area (refer to Table 6.4 overleaf) indicates that occupied flats and tenements were concentrated in the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane. Combined, these districts contained just over 73 per cent of all occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area. This concentration had been inferred from the 1911 statistics but could not be quantified.

As also is shown in Table 6.4, by 1921 flats and tenements were making an impact in the towns of Hamilton, Ithaca, Toowong and Windsor and in Toombul shire, all of which contained areas of older housing ripe for conversion into multiple-occupancy dwellings, within reasonably close proximity to the city centre, and well-served by public transport. Together, these local government areas contained approximately 18 per cent of Brisbane’s occupied flats and tenements. The semi-rural outer-metropolitan districts supported few tenements and flats, although Taringa and Stephens shires and Wynnum town, which encompassed pockets of early suburban settlement as well as semi-rural districts, combined contained just over 4.5 per cent.

It should be noted that the town of Sandgate was excluded from the Brisbane metropolitan area at the 1921 census, but part was included within the boundaries of Greater Brisbane (1924) and was included in the 1933 census data for the Brisbane metropolitan area. Sandgate was a popular seaside resort from the 1860s, and after the opening of the railway in 1882 attracted both holiday crowds and a commuter population. These trends intensified with the popularity of the private automobile in the 1920s, with Sandgate boarding houses and rental holiday flats and tenements becoming attractive investments. At the census of 1921, the town of Sandgate recorded 60 flats and tenements within its boundaries, which was a substantially higher proportion than any of the metropolitan local governments outside the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane (refer to Table 6.4 below).

17 Coorparoo shire, despite recording a population density of 1658.75 persons per square mile, contained just one per cent of occupied Brisbane flats and tenements, reflecting the presence of the suburban detached house and garden in this district (Census 4 April 1921, Vol.II, Part XX, pp1585-7).
18 For a brief overview of the history of Sandgate, refer to Barry Shaw (comp.), The Sandgate/Shorncliffe Heritage Tour, (BHG Tour No.8), Wooloowin, Qld: BHG, 1990.
Table 6.4 Brisbane metropolitan area: Occupied private dwellings, tenements or flats, and boarding houses, lodging houses or coffee palaces within each local government area, as at 4 April 1921.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local government area</th>
<th>Private houses</th>
<th>Percentage of private houses</th>
<th>Tenements or flats</th>
<th>Percentage of tenements or flats</th>
<th>Boarding &amp; lodging houses or coffee palaces</th>
<th>Percentage of board &amp; lodging houses, coffee palaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner city/inner suburbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane City</td>
<td>6766</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>38.94</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>47.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane South, City</td>
<td>7063</td>
<td>16.73</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>34.37</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>25.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals inner city/inner suburbs</td>
<td>13829</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>73.31</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer suburbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton Town</td>
<td>1770</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ithaca Town</td>
<td>4334</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toombul Shire</td>
<td>2797</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toowong Town</td>
<td>2153</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor Town</td>
<td>3920</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals closer suburbs</td>
<td>14974</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>18.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer suburbs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmoral Shire</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belmont Shire</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coorparoo Shire</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoggera Shire</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedron Shire</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moggill Shire</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Shire</td>
<td>1128</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephens Shire</td>
<td>2593</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taringa Shire</td>
<td>1101</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynnum Town</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeerongpilly Shire</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals outer suburbs</td>
<td>13411</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan totals</td>
<td>42214</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1169</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The categorisation of local government areas into 'inner city/inner suburbs', 'closer suburbs' and 'outer suburbs' is mine, made for the purposes of analysing the distribution of flats in metropolitan Brisbane.

The totals of private houses and tenements or flats in the 1921 detailed tables for each local government area, from which the above table is drawn, are slightly greater than statistics for the Brisbane metropolitan area given elsewhere in the census analysis: 42,214 private houses rather with 41,291, and 1,094 tenements or flats rather than with 1,087. However, the differences in the figures are so slight that no significant distortion is apparent.
Chapter 6: Growth, distribution, and the creation of ‘flat colonies’
Distribution: statistical data 1911-1933

The pattern of distribution of flats and tenements within the Brisbane metropolitan area established by 1921 was sustained over the next 12 years, as is evident in Fig. 6.1 and Fig. 6.2 below.

Fig. 6.1 21

Fig. 6.2 22
The number of flats and tenements within each State electoral district in the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1933 confirms the conclusions drawn from the census data recorded in 1921 that, with the exception of the former town of Sandgate, Brisbane’s flats and tenements were concentrated in the inner-suburban core and decreased numerically and as a percentage of private dwellings the further from the city centre (refer to Fig. 6.2 above).

As indicated in Table 6.5 below, approximately 67 per cent of occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1933 were located in the State electoral districts of Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, Kurilpa, Maree and Merthyr. These districts encompassed the city centre and the inner suburbs of Breakfast Creek, Bowen Hills, Highgate Hill, Kangaroo Point, New Farm, Newstead, Petrie Terrace, Spring Hill, South Brisbane, Teneriffe, West End, and parts of East Brisbane and Woolloongabba; they also corresponded roughly with the former cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, which in 1921 had contained just over 73 per cent of Brisbane’s flats and tenements.

Occupied flats and tenements were found in moderate numbers in established closer suburbs immediately beyond the inner-suburban core, with the State electoral districts of Buranda, Hamilton, Ithaca, Kelvin Grove, Sandgate (part), South Brisbane, Toowong and Bremer (part), and Windsor containing approximately 29 per cent of the metropolitan total. The outer suburbs, located in the State electoral districts of Bulimba, Enoggera (part), Logan (part), Nundah, Oxley (part) and Wynnum, contained approximately 4 per cent. In 1933 these outer-metropolitan districts either were semi-rural with low population densities, or contained many of the newer residential subdivisions in which the suburban house predominated, and therefore recorded very few flats and tenements.

23 Although the former south-east districts of the City of South Brisbane are not incorporated within the 1933 inner suburban core, this probably makes little difference to the comparison, as these areas were less densely settled and in all likelihood did not attracted multiple-dwelling buildings in 1921.

24 The State electoral districts of Kelvin Grove, Sandgate (part) and Toowong and Bremer (part) contained substantial semi-rural areas within their boundaries, but have been included in ‘closer suburbs’ because each district contained an older, closer suburb in which flats were making a noticeable impact.
### Table 6.5 Brisbane metropolitan area: Occupied private houses and tenements or flats in each State electoral district, as at 30 June 1933.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State electoral district</th>
<th>Private houses</th>
<th>Percentage of private houses</th>
<th>Tenements or flats</th>
<th>Percentage of tenements or flats</th>
<th>Total private dwellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner city/Inner suburbs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>2044</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>13.34</td>
<td>2549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortitude Valley</td>
<td>2886</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>12.34</td>
<td>3353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurilpa</td>
<td>2699</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>14.35</td>
<td>3242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maree</td>
<td>3180</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>3515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr</td>
<td>2503</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>3188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals inner city/inner suburbs</strong></td>
<td>13312</td>
<td></td>
<td>2535</td>
<td>66.98</td>
<td>15847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total Brisbane flats and tenements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closer suburbs</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3573</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3707</td>
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<td>5.81</td>
<td>85</td>
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<td>3811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>108</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>4263</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toowong and Bremer (part)</td>
<td>3675</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>3446</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windsor</td>
<td>3554</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>3730</td>
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<td><strong>Totals closer suburbs</strong></td>
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<td>1100</td>
<td></td>
<td>30003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of total Brisbane flats and tenements</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outer suburbs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulimba</td>
<td>4127</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>4153</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enoggera (part)</td>
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<td>0.45</td>
<td>3188</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logan (part)</td>
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<td>0.55</td>
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<td>0.79</td>
<td>3801</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxley (part)</td>
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<td>6.45</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>4162</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.79</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.77</td>
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<td><strong>Totals outer suburbs</strong></td>
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<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>22053</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total Brisbane flats and tenements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metropolitan totals</strong></td>
<td>64118</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3785</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>67903</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Again, the categorisation of State electoral districts into ‘inner city/inner suburbs’, ‘closer suburbs’ and ‘outer suburbs’ is mine, made for the purposes of analysing the distribution of flats in metropolitan Brisbane.
Chapter 6: Growth, distribution, and the creation of ‘flat colonies’
Distribution: statistical data 1911-1933

As expected, the 1933 census data also reveals a close correlation between the number of occupied flats and tenements within each State electoral district, and the number of persons occupying flats or tenements in each district. While only 3.52 per cent of the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area resided in flats or tenements in 1933, in areas in which multiple-dwelling buildings were concentrated, this figure increased significantly, with flat- or tenement-dwellers concentrated in the inner city/inner suburbs (refer to Table 6.6 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State electoral district – inner city/inner suburbs</th>
<th>% of pop’n</th>
<th>State electoral district – closer suburbs</th>
<th>% of pop’n</th>
<th>State electoral district – outer suburbs</th>
<th>% of pop’n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>Buranda</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>Bulimba</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortitude Valley</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>Enoggera (part)</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ithaca</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>Logan (part)</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maree</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>Kelvin Grove</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>Nundah</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merthyr</td>
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<td>Sandgate (part)</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>Oxley (part)</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Wynnnum</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Toowong and Bremer (part)</td>
<td>1.82</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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In the combined districts of Brisbane, Fortitude Valley, Kurilpa, Maree and Merthyr (the inner city and inner suburbs), which contained 79,021 persons or 26.36 per cent of the Brisbane metropolitan population, 8.78 per cent of residents lived in tenements or flats. In the electoral districts of Buranda, Hamilton, Ithaca, Kelvin Grove, Sandgate (part), South Brisbane, Toowong and Bremer (part) and Windsor, which contained many older suburbs and 42.77 per cent of the Brisbane metropolitan population, only 2.46 per cent of the population resided in tenements or flats. These were suburbs full of interwar residential subdivisions with detached housing. The outer suburbs, captured in the electoral districts of Bulimba, Enoggera (part), Logan (part), Nundah, Oxley (part) and Wynnnum, contained just over 30 per cent of the Brisbane metropolitan population (92,533 persons) but of these only 0.48 per cent resided in tenements or flats.


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Accounting for the distribution pattern

The distribution of flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area identified from the above census data, confirms contemporary impressions that flats were concentrated in the more densely populated suburbs closest to the city centre.

Choosing the right location was essential for a successful flat development – especially for a purpose-built block designed to attract middle-class tenants. Living in flats did not offer the same degree of privacy, interior space and external facilities (gardens, yards, sheds and garages) as the detached house on a suburban subdivision, so an advantageous location could be an attractive selling point. Investors in flat developments favoured centrally located positions, close to public transport, workplaces, shopping facilities, schools, recreational venues such as parks and sports grounds, and public entertainment such as picture theatres and restaurants.\(^{28}\)

In the 1920s the inner city offered the greatest range of entertainment attractions, shopping facilities and white-collar work places, and the inner suburbs contained established schools, recreational venues and local shopping nodes. It is not surprising that the older suburbs of New Farm, Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill, Kangaroo Point and South Brisbane, on the periphery of the city centre and with ease of access to it, should be the focus for Brisbane’s first wave of purpose-built flat construction.

A number of economic and other drivers facilitated the concentration of flat buildings (both purpose-built and house conversions) in the inner and closer suburbs. Of particular significance was the confluence of rising expectations in relation to the standards of comfort, convenience and aesthetic quality that the average residence should offer, with the increasing sale and rateable values of inner suburban land. The 1920s brought greater access to home finance, new household technologies, and the private automobile; rising consumerism; and improved city infrastructure (such as sealed roads and public transportation systems). Workers on average incomes now had access to affordable new outer-suburban housing incorporating kitchen fit-outs and internal bathrooms, and the middle classes could insist on the latest in home design, comfort and convenience. As a consequence, the demand for older houses as homes declined significantly at this period (refer to Chapter 5).

\(^{28}\) See, for example, E.J.A. Weller ‘Economic Factors of Flat Development. High land costs areas have advantages. Points for consideration of investors.’ in ABJQ, 10 October 1935, pp10-12, 14.
Concomitantly, the saleable value of inner-suburban land close to established public transport systems rose, as did land rates, contributing to the subdivision of inner-suburban estates for infill residential development, including the construction of purpose-designed blocks of flats. In 1910 and again in 1920, the Queensland Government legislated to increase the rating powers of local governments, permitting the general rate ceiling to double each time. In addition, since 1890, rateable value had been equated with the unimproved value of land.29

A critical factor determining the location of Brisbane’s interwar flats was proximity to public transport – motorbuses, trams, trains and ferries. While the better-class blocks of flats offered garaging, many did not. They were erected for tenants who chose to live in a flat adjacent to public transport, to avoid the expense or inconvenience of motor vehicle ownership and maintenance.

Ready access to a tramline was valued particularly highly, and was of paramount importance to the revival in flat construction from 1932-1933, following the virtual cessation of flat-building activity during the depression. As the *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland* recorded in October 1933:

> Only certain areas of Brisbane, close to the city, were favoured by flat builders, who were influenced by the proximity of the land to tramlines. Easy accessibility was a factor which could make or mar a flat-building proposition.30

Brisbane’s tramways system was electrified in the late 1890s and expanded in the first four decades of the twentieth century.31 By the 1920s, trams had become a popular means of commuting to work or to the central city retail stores and entertainments. Every tramline fed into the centre of Brisbane, the heart of the city’s commerce, industry and port.

From the earliest flat developments in the 1920s, purpose-built flats were concentrated along or in the vicinity of the principal tramlines in the inner suburbs. Popular streets included: Brunswick, Moray and Merthyr streets in New Farm; Leichhardt Street and St

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29 Greenwood and Laverty, p358.
30 ABJQ, 11 October 1933, p20 and in Courier-Mail, 13 October 1933, p7 and in Telegraph, 31 October 1933, p17.
31 Refer to Eric J. Morwood, ‘History of Electric Tramways in Brisbane’ pp1-11 in *Institute of Engineers Australia, Queensland Division technical papers* 11:1, 1970.
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Fig. 6.3 Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Tramways network, as at 5 March 1931. 32

32 BCC, Tramways Department, Annual Report 1931.
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Paul's Terrace in Spring Hill; Petrie Terrace; Grey, Vulture, Melbourne and Stanley streets in South Brisbane; Gladstone Road through to Dutton Park; and later Hamilton and Sandgate roads. Gregory Terrace, within easy walking distance of a tramline, and Wickham Terrace, a few minutes walk from the central business district and a tramline, were lined by flats, and houses converted into other forms of multiple-occupancy. Kangaroo Point, whilst devoid of tramline or railway, lay directly across the river from the central business district, and could be accessed easily by ferry.

By the late 1930s vacant allotments in the popular inner-suburban districts, close to tramlines, were becoming scarce. Realty agents were encouraging owners of older homes in these suburbs to demolish before selling because the land was more valuable as a cleared site, especially for flat-building purposes. In February 1939 the President of the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (Mr Ray White) advised:

... it was uneconomical to allow old houses with a low rental to remain on highly-rated land. The ordinances of the City Council relating to flat-building and residennials rendered it increasingly difficult for owners of these properties to convert old homes into flats. The selling values of old houses were low.

Land in 'pick' positions of Brisbane was often more valuable cleared of old construction than with obsolete types of houses upon them. In districts like New Farm owners of old properties were realising the economy of demolition. ...

Cleared sites close to the city would probably be occupied by flats, which were a popular form of investment. Blocks of modern flats erected in recent years had been profitable forms of investment, returning from 8 to 12 per cent. Recently the turnover in flat properties had been considerable.34

As may be inferred from the above, the spatial distribution of Brisbane’s interwar flat buildings was driven by economic factors, topography, and the availability of public transport. Not until the mid-1930s did Brisbane City Council attempt to direct the location of flat developments in accordance with modern town planning principles (refer to Chapter 4), but by this time the dominant distribution pattern was well-established.

33 'Map of Brisbane Electric Tramways System', in BCC Tramways Department, Annual Report 1930.
34 Cited in Courier-Mail, 14 February 1939, p20.
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‘Flat colonies’

Areas of particularly intensive flat development were described by contemporaries as ‘flat colonies’, conjuring images of districts in which armies of flat-dwellers prevailed. While Brisbane’s principal flat districts did not generate the population densities found in the great cities of Europe and North America, or in the inner suburbs of Sydney, flat buildings (both new blocks and house conversions) were highly visible in the townscape, and in sufficient numbers could substantially alter the character of streets and suburbs. Contemporaries often remarked on the physical presence of flat buildings in the Brisbane townscape, as illustrated in the following 1929 newspaper extract:

Of the near suburbs gradually being converted into flat areas one can name New Farm, Highgate Hill, Hamilton and Spring Hill. A tour of these districts demonstrates the trend of the new mode of living. Old homes, palatial mansions of half a century ago, have been renovated and converted into ‘modern’ flats, while in New Farm, particularly, one observes the construction of several blocks of flats built on Southern principles, the flats having all conveniences in the way of private entrance, bathrooms, kitchens and verandas.

New Farm, popularly considered to be Brisbane’s premier ‘flat colony’, was among the first districts to be transformed by the presence of flat buildings – initially by the conversions of large old homes into flats and tenements, and from 1921 by purpose-built flat developments. By 1940 the character of the suburb had been redefined from that of a middle-class suburban retreat to a contemporary, cosmopolitan flat district with a broader socio-economic base. The New Farm experience of flats and flat-dwelling is examined in detail in Chapter 10.

Other suburbs in which flats made a substantial impact on the physical and social fabric during the interwar years included South Brisbane, West End, Kangaroo Point, Fortitude Valley and Spring Hill. These inner urban areas were within walking distance of the city centre, were well-served by public transport, and were more densely populated than suburbs further from central Brisbane.

During the 1930s ‘boom’ in flat construction very few of the closer suburbs remained immune from the ‘flat fashion’, with Highgate Hill and Hamilton-Clayfield, near the tramlines, in particular attracting many substantial new flat developments.

If there were suburbs and districts that could be described as ‘flat colonies’, then there were streets or precincts that could be considered as ‘flat enclaves’ – pockets dominated by flat buildings. Julius and Moray streets in New Farm, Westbourne Street in Highgate Hill and Pixley Street in Kangaroo Point were prominent examples. Pixley Street has been re-developed, but the others retain their interwar ‘flat’ character.

**South Brisbane-West End**

In South Brisbane and West End³⁷ the conversion of houses into flats and tenements became legion in the interwar period. By the early twentieth century many of the larger homes were functioning as boarding or lodging houses, but with flat-living gaining in popularity between the world wars, many more were transformed into tenement and flat buildings.³⁸

Served by a number of tramlines, the railway and bus routes, and in close proximity to the city centre and to the South Brisbane retail and industrial sectors, the district also attracted some of the earliest of Brisbane’s purpose-built blocks of flats. Ventnor Flats (c.1922) at the corner of Edmonstone and Russell streets, Stanley Flats (1923) in Stanley Street West overlooking the river, and Kia-ora Flats (1924) at the corner of Montague Road and Boundary Street, were erected during the earliest phase of purpose-built flat construction in Brisbane.

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³⁷ During the second half of the nineteenth century this district had attracted industry and working-class housing on the river floodplain around West End; middle-class residential estates on the higher ground around and above Vulture Street and on Stanley Street West overlooking the river and North Brisbane; a vibrant shopping district along Melbourne, Grey, Stanley and Boundary streets; and waterside and industrial activity along Stanley Street adjacent to the South Brisbane wharves. In the early twentieth century, as the district became more congested with people, businesses and industry, the middle classes vacated the district and their large homes became boarding and lodging houses or tenements (refer especially to QPOD, 1868-1940).

³⁸ This is evident in BCC, Health Department files on Licensed Premised – Multiple-Dwellings, the bulk of which pertain to boarding houses and houses converted into tenements or flats.
However, the majority of flat buildings in this district date to the flat-building ‘boom’ of the post-depression years. Between 1933 and 1941 at least 22 blocks of more than two flats (including some flats and shops) were completed in South Brisbane and 14 in West End (refer to Appendix 13). The district also attracted a number of purpose-built ‘residential’ (apartment buildings or serviced rooms) and tenements. At least four are known to have been erected in South Brisbane between 1929 and 1940, and one in West End in 1939. Maisonettes and pairs of flats were popular in the more residential sectors of West End and in Highgate Hill. Figure 6.4 below shows the distribution of these purpose-built blocks.

**Highgate Hill**

In the nineteenth century the suburb of Highgate Hill, encompassing the higher ground to the south and east of South Brisbane and West End, had attracted the establishment of many fine middle-class villas in extensive grounds – especially along Dornoch Terrace and in the streets off Hampstead Road. In common with other inner suburbs, by the 1920s these homes were being converted into flats, and their grounds subdivided for more intensive suburban development.

Between 1935 and 1940 Highgate Hill attracted at least 13 new blocks of more than two flats, including Highview Flats (designed in 1934) and Regina Court (1939) on Dornoch Terrace – the latter can be numbered amongst Brisbane’s very best interwar flat developments – and Carmel Court (1937) on Vulture Street (refer to Appendix 13). Refer to Figure 6.4 below which shows the distribution of these purpose-built blocks.

Westbourne Street, a narrow roadway off Hampstead Road about a quarter of the way up Highgate Hill (within walking distance of the Vulture Street tramline), became a small flat enclave with 5 purpose-built blocks of flats (including a pair of maisonettes) constructed between 1936 and 1940, and several house conversions. The attraction of this street for flat developments appears to have been threefold: the availability of land subdivided from earlier suburban estates (some of which had fronted Blakeney Street further up the hill); proximity to public transport; and the views. All the new flat buildings were constructed on the higher side of the street (the southern side), where they obtained a vista across South Brisbane to the city centre.

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39 Nos 3 (Dolbun, cnr Hampstead Road, 1937); 19 (Mrs Wright’s Flats, 1939); 23 (Marlet, 1940); 27 (Mrs Cowlishaw’s Flats, 1939); and 35-37 (Misses Stedman’s Maisonettes, 1939).
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Fig. 6.4 Distribution of identified purpose-built flat buildings in the South Brisbane-West End-Highgate Hill districts, 1920-1941.40

40 Base map sourced from DERM, November 2010; BCC suburban boundaries current as at 31 December 2010.
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‘Flat colonies’

Spring Hill

In the early 1920s expectations were raised in many quarters of the Brisbane community that Spring Hill\(^{41}\) would follow in the wake of New Farm as a significant ‘flat colony’. The suburb attracted much conversion of houses into flats or other forms of multiple-occupancy dwelling and a considerable number of new flat buildings and ‘residential’, although not to the extent of New Farm.

From the 1910s, older larger residences along the Spring Hill ridges were being converted into boarding houses, nursing homes, private hospitals, tenements and flats, in much the same manner as in New Farm.\(^{42}\) In addition, by the 1920s Gregory and Wickham terraces were attracting some very fine blocks of new flats. As at New Farm, these developments were constructed mostly on the site of earlier middle-class residences or on subdivisions of the grounds surrounding these. Victoria Flats (1923) at the corner of Gregory Terrace and Kinross Street, the first purpose-built flats on this terrace, were constructed for Mrs Fanny Kilroe within the grounds of her family home.\(^{43}\) Craigston Flats (1927) on Wickham Terrace, a high-rise development of eight levels plus basement, rose on the site of an earlier Craigston (a one-storey timber residence) and in stark contrast to the impoverished timber cottages in nearby Hanly’s Hollow.\(^{44}\)

As shown in Appendix 13, 20 purpose-built blocks of flats have been confirmed as erected in Spring Hill between 1922 and 1941. Approximately one-third were located on Gregory Terrace, including some of Brisbane’s finest flats, such as Carrington (1934) at the corner of Warry Street and Dunvegan (1936) at the corner of Park Street. Being within easy walking distance of the city centre, Spring Hill attracted at least 10 substantial new purpose-built residencies, in which single rooms (often with breakfast provided) could be let on a weekly or even daily basis. Refer to Figure 6.5 below.

\(^{41}\) Spring Hill was established in the mid-nineteenth century following the 1856 survey of Hanly’s Hollow (between Wickham Terrace and Leichhardt Street) and the 1860 survey of Spring Hollow (between Boundary Street and Gregory Terrace), as Brisbane’s first dormitory suburb. During the nineteenth century a pattern of residential settlement was established which reflected the dominant socio-economic structure: middle-class housing on large blocks along the ridges in juxtaposition with workers’ cottages compacted onto tiny subdivisions in the valleys between. Having been extensively subdivided prior to the passing of The Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Act 1885, which prohibited residential subdivision of less than 16 perches (one-tenth of an acre), subdivisions of as little as 5 perches were not uncommon in the Spring Hill valleys. For a further overview of the early development of Spring Hill, refer to Rod Fisher, Spring Hill Heritage Tour: St Pauls to Gregory Terrace, (BHG Tour No.12), Kelvin Grove, Qld: BHG, 1993.

\(^{42}\) QPOD, 1900-1920.

\(^{43}\) QHR, ‘Victoria Flats’, (601888).

\(^{44}\) MWSSB, ‘Survey Field Book 12c’, November 1912 (updated 1924), fol.80.
Little purpose-built flat development occurred in the Spring Hill valleys, despite the hopes of town planners and social reformers. By the early 1920s housing in these areas was widely considered to constitute some of the worst ‘slum’ conditions in Brisbane.45 This view was sustained throughout the interwar period, with living conditions in the hollows of Spring Hill deteriorating to such an extent that the Town Planning Association of Queensland targeted these areas for slum clearance and redevelopment.46 Flat buildings were considered a means of reinvigorating the suburb and improving living conditions:

... it is not hard to visualise the day when Spring Hill is covered with modern workmen's flats in place of the poverty-stricken wooden houses that serve all the purposes of flats, without half their comfort or conveniences.47

Early in 1938, during the heyday of the Brisbane flat-building ‘boom’, a renewed flurry of flat developments in Spring Hill prompted the Courier-Mail to predict that the suburb was about to become another ‘Darlinghurst of Brisbane’, similar to New Farm. Proximity to the city was considered the greatest attraction. The paper supported the call by the Catholic Archbishop of Brisbane, the Rev. Dr James Duhig, for a slum clearance program for Spring Hill, but argued that this should be achieved via large-scale private investment in modern flats:

The suggestion is that financial organisations might buy large blocks of this territory, and, with big building schemes in view, clear the land of old settlement, and amalgamate all the odds and ends of allotments, on many of which, as they stand, council ordinances prohibit the erection of flats.48

No one accepted the challenge, the difficulties of urban planning in Spring Hill seemingly too great for either the Brisbane City Council or private investment. New flat developments occurred in the usual haphazard fashion, wherever opportunity and potential arose, concentrated along the major Spring Hill thoroughfares: Gregory Terrace (within walking distance of a tram service); Wickham Terrace (a short walk from the heart of the city); and Leichhardt and Upper Edward streets (serviced by tramlines into the city) – as illustrated in Figure 6.5 below.

45 See, for example, ‘The New Brisbane and Its Residential Areas’ in Building, 12 April 1924, p143.
46 ABJQ, October 1936, p5.
47 ‘Flats As Good Investments, Opinion of Real Estate Institute’ in Courier Mail, 30 June 1936, p5.
48 Courier-Mail, 15 February 1938, p22.
Fig. 6.5 Distribution of identified purpose-built flat buildings in Spring Hill, 1920-1941.\(^{49}\)

49 Base map sourced from DERM, November 2010; BCC suburban boundaries current as at 31 December 2010.
Kangaroo Point

Another inner suburb favoured by those willing to convert older homes into flats was Kangaroo Point. By 1924 there was some anticipation that the suburb would follow the lead taken by Spring Hill in attracting flat developments:

... A noticeable feature of Kangaroo Point is the number of large homes which have been converted into flats. It is not to be wondered at, considering the many advantages of the district, that such should be the case. Everything that appeals to the flat-dweller is provided by Kangaroo Point – ease of access, pretty views, high elevation, and general convenience. No doubt, in a few years, this district will vie with Gregory-terrace and Wickham-terrace as Brisbane's Flat District.50

The earliest identified purpose-built block of flats in Kangaroo Point was Wyuna Flats (1923) in Pixley Street, overlooking the Brisbane River and the city centre. A handful of other new flat buildings were constructed in the suburb between 1925 and 1929, mostly in or near Pixley Street which, being close to the Edward Street ferry and with sensational views over the city, became a popular flat enclave.

Isobel Roberts, whose childhood was spent at Kangaroo Point, considered that in 1925 flats buildings had yet to make a significant impact on the character of the suburb:

There have not been enormous changes in the old place; there are no trams to disturb the peace, and the old homes with their beautiful old grounds have not seen much alteration. ... Some very modern flats have sprung up, but there has been very little alteration in the business part of the Point. There always seems to be a quiet, restful shady air about the surroundings, and perhaps that is why so many beautiful homes still are occupied by tenants who have no desire to cut up their gardens and make room for small villas. ... 51

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50 ‘Kangaroo Point’ in ABJQ, 7 March 1924, p28.

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PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
From the mid-1920s, however, speculation that a bridge would be built across the Brisbane River between Kangaroo Point and Fortitude Valley fuelled an upsurge in the property market, producing much subdivision of the older estates for modern residential infill, particularly flat developments. A realty agent interviewed for the Courier-Mail in 1935 argued that the cross-river bridge, linking important traffic centres at Woolloongabba and Fortitude Valley (perhaps he should have stated that these were also major Brisbane shopping centres), would stimulate development at Kangaroo Point, which he anticipated would become ‘a bustling suburb’.\(^{52}\)

As contemporaries predicted, with new flat construction in Brisbane gaining momentum and the Story Bridge well underway, Kangaroo Point experienced intensive flat development. At least 26 new flat developments (including maisonettes) were approved by Council during the study period, principally from 1933 to 1941. How many of these came to fruition has not been confirmed.\(^{53}\) Main Street, with potential access to Fortitude Valley and the city centre, was a highly favoured location. Some of the more noteworthy developments included Chale (1936) on Main Street, near the corner of Cairns Street (a large, four-storeyed block of at least nine brick flats and a basement garage); Juniper Flats (1937) in Ferry Street (near the intersection with Main Street); and Cliffside (1937) in Lower River Terrace. The latter, a five-storeyed block of seven brick flats and caretaker’s quarters, on the Kangaroo Point Cliffs overlooking the city centre, survives as one of Brisbane’s finest interwar flat buildings.\(^{54}\)

These developments contributed to what the Courier-Mail identified as a flat building ‘boom’ in Kangaroo Point in late 1938:

> ... many see a new trend and a new development in Kangaroo Point, which, they believe, should mean a brighter future for a suburb that has always maintained a quiet aloofness and dignified beauty. ... in more recent years imposing blocks of flats and residential have gradually appeared. The high ridge, along which runs River Terrace, overlooking the city, has a great number of these, but there are outstanding examples on the eastern side of Main Street as well. It is here, if anywhere, that new developments are likely to take place.\(^{55}\)

\(^{52}\) Courier-Mail, 6 August 1935, p10.

\(^{53}\) Due to the late-twentieth-century redevelopment of Kangaroo Point as a high-rise commuter suburb, much of the interwar flat development has been demolished. Refer to Appendix 13 for those identified.

\(^{54}\) QHR, ‘Cliffside Flats’, (601650).

Fortitude Valley

Fortitude Valley is one of the oldest suburbs in Brisbane, historically a working class district attracting a mix of retail, commercial, workshop industry, light manufacturing, and worker housing. By the 1920s, living conditions in parts of the Valley were considered to be severely degraded. Randolph Bedford, journalist and politician, had drawn attention to the situation in mid-1919:

The visitor to Brisbane, seeing June glowing in the Botanic Gardens, and burning in the poinsettia by Parliament House cannot think that in the Valley there are slums as bad as any in Surrey Hills or Pyrmont, or Collingwood or Richmond – which are almost as ugly as tenements in the East End of London, but not quite as horrific, because there is not darkness, and the poverty of Australia does not much more than smudge the sunlight. Yet the slums of Brisbane are bad enough to be unbelievable, without demonstration, and none worse than those in the Valley.  

During the interwar years this district attracted the conversion of residences into flats and tenements, compounding already impoverished living conditions. This activity was not confined to the larger homes along St Paul’s Terrace and Brunswick Street, although many of these did function as boarding houses, serviced rooms and flats in the interwar period. By the mid-1930s, the Town Planning Association of Queensland, horrified at the impact of the house conversions, was calling for ‘a much needed programme of clearance and reconstruction.’

In the midst of the house conversions, a number of purpose-built interwar flats were erected, but in general these were targeted at lower socio-economic tenants compared with the fine blocks being built in nearby New Farm. Bulolo Flats (1934) and Elgin Flats (1935), both in McLachlan Street, were among the better-quality flat buildings, as were Baysmere Flats (1941) on Bowen Terrace. The area was a popular location for ‘residentialis’, with at least five substantial new blocks (mostly serviced-rooms) known to have been erected in the Valley between 1927 and 1940 (refer to Appendix 13).

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56 For the history of the establishment of settlement at Fortitude Valley by the J.D. Lang immigrants in the late 1840s, refer to W. Ross Johnston, Brisbane, The First Thirty Years, Bowen Hills, Qld: Boolarong, 1988, pp162-4.
58 ABJQ, October 1936, p5.
Postal directories and the ‘to let’ columns in the daily newspapers provide a reasonable indication that the conversion of homes into boarding houses, tenements and flats in Fortitude Valley was widespread during the interwar years.
Popular also was the mix of flats or serviced rooms and commercial premises. Duncan Flats (1922), the earliest identified block of flats in the Valley, was a large development with retail spaces on the ground floor.

A distinctive aspect of multiple-occupancy accommodation in the Valley was the association with automobile sales and servicing businesses, which were attracted to the Valley from the 1920s. In the interwar period several of these firms erected business premises which incorporated flats or tenements or serviced rooms. For example, Vickers Ltd in partnership with F.J. O'Keefe received building approval to erect a service station with flats above in Barry Parade in 1928. A.E. Griffths constructed a similar arrangement of service garage and flats above at 606 Wickham Street in 1937. In 1938 the OK Rubber Company (possibly associated with Vickers and F.J. O'Keefe), erected a new building in Barry Parade which combined their business premises at street level with a flat and tenement rooms on the floor above.59 OK Apartments, as they were known, were exclusively for men:

- A.A.A. MEN ONLY.
- Ultra-modern, furnished, serviced rooms, light breakfast served, hot & cold water, billiards, etc. £1 per week. OK APARTMENTS, Over OK Rubber Co., Barry Parade, Valley.60

**Bowen Hills**

To the north of Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills attracted some of Brisbane’s earliest purpose-built flat buildings, along Breakfast Creek Road below O’Reilly’s Hill (refer to Appendix 13). As flat developments, the quality and facilities offered appear to have fallen midway between the flats and residential blocks of Fortitude Valley and the more glamorous blocks of middle-class flats being erected in New Farm. During the ‘boom’ in Brisbane flat construction in the 1930s, at least four new blocks of flats were erected on O’Reilly’s Hill. Two of these were substantial blocks, built in Jordan Terrace on the northern slope of the hill below Folkestone (the old Perry family residence): Alliston Flats (1934) and Taishan Flats (1936). The latter, a fine, three-storeyed, well-appointed brick and render building, ranks among Brisbane’s best interwar flats. However, the suburb, much of it sandwiched between the tramline along Breakfast Creek Road and the railway to the northern suburbs, also attracted numerous house conversions.

59 BCC, building approvals nos. 16,151 (5 June 1928), 33,089 (13 February 1937), 38,260 (23 June 1938).
60 Advertisement in *Courier-Mail*, 17 February 1940, p17.
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‘Flat colonies’

Hamilton-Clayfield-Ascot

Vying with the inner suburbs as an attractive location for interwar flat developments was the district to the north-north-east of Breakfast Creek, encompassing the suburbs of Hamilton, Clayfield and Ascot. Although not within a comfortable walking distance of the city centre, they were well-served by tramlines along (New) Sandgate Road and Hamilton Road (later Kingsford Smith Drive) and by the railway to Sandgate. In the nineteenth century these suburbs had attracted middle-class estates, which from the 1920s were subdivided for closer residential development. The homes of Hamilton, prominently situated on Toorak Hill and Eldernell Hill overlooking the Brisbane River, were substantial and picturesque, prompting the Sunday Mail late in 1924 to claim that ‘Hamilton is the Toorak or the Mosman of Brisbane in respect to ‘class’.

While purpose-built flats made comparatively little impact in Hamilton-Clayfield-Ascot until the mid-1930s, the conversion of many older, large residences into flats and other forms of multiple-occupancy was evident from the 1910s. Some of Brisbane’s finest nineteenth-century mansions were converted into flats at this time, including: Palmarosa (c1918) at Hamilton; Nyrambla (1929) at Ascot; and Tarranalma (1936) at Clayfield. Transformed into nine flats at a cost of £2,000, Tarranalma was the most expensive of the Brisbane interwar house conversions identified from Brisbane City Council building approval registers. The owner, Mr G.D. Logan, a prominent pastoralist, had acquired the house on about 12 acres (4.85ha) in 1919, and between 1926 and 1929 subdivided and sold most of the land. The Logan family reserved one of the Tarranalma flats for their private use, and retained the property until the 1960s.

Prior to the opening of Moreton Bay to free settlement in February 1842, the district now occupied by the suburbs of Hamilton, Ascot and Clayfield was surveyed into 640 acre blocks (square-mile allotments) available for occupation under squatting license. In the early to mid-1850s this area was re-surveyed into freehold allotments for farms and town estates, with smaller blocks (from about 5 to 11 acres) on the slopes of the hills overlooking the Brisbane River. Middle-class residents and land speculators quickly acquired these riverine allotments, and the subdivisions they created attracted middle-class settlement from the early 1860s. During the immigration boom of the 1880s substantial subdivision of the mid-nineteenth-century villa estates occurred, intensifying in the early twentieth century as Brisbane’s population soared again. From the 1910s older houses no longer required to accommodate large extended families or to sustain surrounding estates, were targeted for conversion into flats or tenements or pressed into institutional use, such as convents, schools and benevolent homes. (DERM, title documents (various), survey plans B.1234.13 (1851) and M31.35 (1861), and various subsequent survey plans; estate subdivision maps held by John Oxley Library; suburban history series published in the Brisbane Courier (1906, 1930-1931), Sunday Mail (1928-1929) and Courier-Mail (1936); series on ‘Brisbane’s Historic Homes’ by F.E. Lord in the Queenslander (1930-1932).)

Sunday Mail, 14 December 1924, p16.

BCC, building approval no. 31,523 (6 April 1936); QHR, ‘Tarranalma’, (600184).

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PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
By the mid-1930s the popularity of converting the grand houses of Hamilton, Clayfield and Ascot’s nineteenth-century elite into flats, was worrying contemporary observers:

The cramping of settlement in the district is becoming very apparent, and if the tendency to create flats out of old houses is carried too far, those who predict the encroachment of more respectable types of slums will not be far out in their forecasts. 64

So intensive was this interwar phase of residential development, that the author of a mid-1940 Sunday Mail article on Hamilton and Ascot – ‘Brisbane’s two most attractive suburbs’ – considered these suburbs to be under threat from ‘the menace of flats’:

Flats are the greatest disintegrators of select residential areas. They are now encroaching on Hamilton and Ascot.

In those suburbs there are very many large homes – much too large for the families that occupy them – and they stand on allotments which demand a big outlay of money each year on rates and upkeep.

Since the war began several owners of such homes have inquired from the City Council whether permission would be granted to convert their houses into blocks of flats. Arrangements are being made to have certain large allotments subdivided.

Thus the way is open for the introduction of flats to an area hitherto select.

Large homes do not fit in with the modern trend. They may have given Hamilton its selectiveness, but, since nothing is so easily ‘converted’ into flats as a large house, they may also take that selectiveness away.65

Furthermore, from 1934 new flats developments were appearing in considerable numbers in the district – particularly along, and in the vicinity of, Hamilton and Sandgate roads, which were served during the interwar period by tramlines linking the closer northern suburbs to both Fortitude Valley and the city centre. Sites along Hamilton Road also offered fine views over the Brisbane River.

The earliest identified purpose-built block of more than two flats in Hamilton was Greystaines (1934) at 240 Hamilton Road, a three-storeyed block of six flats designed in the Mediterranean style by architect George Rae. In a fever of flat construction, most

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64 ‘The Suburban Development of Brisbane. Hamilton is Now as The Cross-roads The Invasion of Industries is Disquieting’ in Courier-Mail, 4 March 1936, p18.
65 Sunday Mail, 9 June 1940, p10.
of the other purpose-built flats overlooking the Hamilton Reach of the Brisbane River were erected between 1936 and 1941 (refer to Appendix 13).

Clayfield attracted a number of large developments along Sandgate Road in the late 1930s, including Hampton Court (1938), one of Brisbane’s larger experiments with modern architecture, designed by E.J.A. Weller; and Coraki Court (1938), designed by George Rae. Each of these developments accommodated 12 flats in one building. Nearby in Lapraik Street, near the boundary between Ascot and Albion, another 1938 development comprised 12 flats in two buildings (Meerawa and Yearinga) (refer to Appendix 13).

Ascot, further removed from the tramlines, attracted few new substantial flat developments, although maisonettes were quite popular. The largest identified interwar block of flats in this suburb was the romantically named Agincourt Flats at 22 Henry Street, a two-storeyed brick block of four self-contained flats, two flats per storey, completed in 1935. Located just south of Lancaster Road and within walking distance of the Ascot Railway Station, Henry Street also attracted the construction of a two-storeyed block of maisonettes ‘Fashioned on Lines of English Manor’ (1934) and the conversion of Nyrambla, an 1880s brick mansion, into flats (1929).66

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66 ABJQ, 10 October 1934, p13; BCC, building approvals nos. 19,254 (2 July 1929), 26,946 (28 May 1934); Courier-Mail, 29 June 1934, p21, 26 March 1935, p23.
Conclusion

An analysis of the census data pertaining to dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area revealed a strong growth in multiple-occupancy dwellings, particularly flats and tenements, between 1911 and 1921. During this period Brisbane had experienced significant population growth and a chronic housing shortage, which encouraged the conversion of older homes into multiple-occupancy, and brought flat-living into public focus. These were the years in which the meaning of ‘flat’ was transfigured in popular thinking from a level or storey in a commercial building or warehouse, to a residence within a larger residential building.\footnote{Refer to Appendix 1, ‘Flat vocabulary’}

By 1920 a pattern had been established in Brisbane in which the conversion of older homes into flats was concentrated in the inner suburbs close to the city centre, and in the older established suburbs beyond the inner core, close to public transport networks, where large houses in substantial grounds had become redundant as single-family homes.

The construction of purpose-built blocks of flats from the early 1920s followed a similar distribution pattern, overlaid by the availability of suitable sites. The subdivision of the old villa estates in suburbs such as New Farm, Highgate Hill, Hamilton and Clayfield, combined with their proximity to public transport services, proved a winning combination for the developers of new flat buildings. Purpose-built flats, which usually required a greater capital outlay to construct than the house conversions, invariably were erected in areas close to public transport, especially the tramlines, but also along railways. That suitable sites for new flat buildings were found primarily in the districts already popular for house conversions, was the corollary to the abandonment of the larger houses and estates in these areas.

Suitable sites in New Farm and other inner suburbs were taken up first, with developers turning their attention to suburbs further afield, such as Highgate Hill on the south side of the Brisbane River and Hamilton and Clayfield on the north side, from the mid-1930s.
The concentration of interwar flats in ‘colonies’ and ‘enclaves’ – especially in New Farm, South Brisbane, West End, Highgate Hill, Spring Hill, Kangaroo Point, Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, and Hamilton – heightened public awareness of the physical presence of flat buildings in the metropolitan area, and reinforced the perception that flats and the flat-lifestyle they engendered constituted a significant ingredient in modern living. However, statistically, new flat buildings represented a tiny proportion of dwellings in Brisbane during the interwar period – much less than the 5.57 per cent of occupied private dwellings which were flats (purpose-built and house conversions) and tenements recorded at the 1933 census.

It was the concentration of new flat buildings in specific areas of Brisbane which accounted for their prominence in the community consciousness. While none of the new blocks of suburban flats was high-rise – few exceeded three storeys and they were all ‘walk-ups’ – the larger blocks were of a form and size which distinguished them from adjacent or nearby detached houses. Further, when groups of two- or three-storeyed flat buildings erected on adjoining and nearby allotments transformed streetscapes in less than a decade, the effect was difficult to ignore – particularly along main thoroughfares such as Gregory Terrace in Spring Hill, Vulture Street in South Brisbane, Brunswick Street in New Farm, and Hamilton Road in Hamilton.

The physical appearance of Brisbane’s ‘flat colonies’ changed dramatically in the interwar period, with nineteenth-century mansions converted into flats, and infill housing and new blocks of flats erected on the old villa estates. To the disquiet of social reformers who advocated the replacement of dilapidated early working-class housing in the more congested districts (particularly in the valleys of Spring Hill and in much of Fortitude Valley) with substantial new flat development, this did not occur. So long as flat construction remained the province of private enterprise, there was no enticement to erect expensive buildings in a ‘slum’ district. Developers and investors in new flat buildings continued with the formula established in the early 1920s: choose a suburban site close to established facilities, entertainment venues and public transport.
Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats

The interwar ‘flat fashion’ in Brisbane co-incided with a period of rapid cultural change in which new architectural and design movements, new technologies and fabrics, and new, affordable, mass-produced household appliances became part and parcel of modern living.

As a form of residential accommodation new to Brisbane, the purpose-designed blocks of flats of the interwar period encapsulated in their design, planning, equipping, finishes and furnishings, both the spirit and the technology of early-twentieth-century modernity. In their exteriors – the street façades in particular – they mirrored the latest in architectural stylistic influences. The interior planning was as creative as investor budgets permitted, tempered by the requirements of local building and health regulations. In their equipping, new developments (especially the better-quality flats) vied to incorporate the latest in services and facilities, and to provide built-in cabinetry. Interior finishes embraced the latest in materials and colours – from terrazzo bathroom flooring to decorative plaster ceilings, bakelite light fittings and papered walls. Whether an expensive or modestly-priced development, there was inevitably something ‘modern’ of note.

The majority of Brisbane’s new blocks of flats were designed by professional architects, but in seeking to influence the quality of these developments through advocacy, education and example, the architectural profession assumed a broader role in the planning and design of Brisbane’s interwar flat buildings.

This chapter is not a critique of architectural design and planning employed in interwar flat buildings, but rather, offers an overview of the principal professional influences, and the impact of local regulations and conditions, on the planning and design of flats in Brisbane in the interwar years. The main types of flats erected in Brisbane at this period are identified, and some insights provided as to the nature of the accommodation offered.

The 1920s was the era of big bold colour and strong geometric design in interior decorating and furnishing; in the 1930s, as Art Moderne style swept the western world, the boldness of ‘Art Deco’ gave way to more streamlined designs and more subdued colours. The impact of these design influences on the furnishing and decorating of Brisbane interwar flats is also examined briefly in this chapter.
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
Professional influences

Professional influences
International inspiration
Largely due to a persistent sense of geographical isolation and numerical insignificance, interwar Australia considered itself to be an outpost of western civilisation, a legacy of British imperialism, and a nation distinctly different from its Asian and Pacific neighbours. Western culture was Australia’s heritage and its source of contemporary inspiration. Australian architects of this period maintained strong interests in, and connections with, architectural developments in Britain, Continental Europe and North America, making conscious efforts to keep abreast of international trends through journal subscriptions¹ and overseas study, travel and work.²

As the construction of purpose-built flats gained in popularity in Australia in the 1920s, overseas flat developments attracted considerable attention from Australian architects:

> With the planning and building of flats the modern building world is much exercised. Hence the architect, no less than the promoter of the exercise, naturally turns to every source of inspiration or information available – American, English, Continental. In fact, so anxious are we to keep pace with, or even to forge ahead of, housing elsewhere, that it has become customary for architects to take trips to America and the Continent, in order to acquaint themselves with what is being done elsewhere.³

Australian architectural trade journals of the interwar period regularly published articles analysing overseas flat developments. Continental Europe, faced with rapidly increasing urban populations, was in the throes of developing community housing models in the form of high-rise, multiple-building apartment complexes to accommodate its proletariats.⁴ North America similarly was experimenting with the provision of workers’ apartments and tenements in large-scale developments.⁵

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¹ For example, a contributor to the Sunday Mail, writing about contemporary domestic architecture in Brisbane in 1940, claimed that ‘fashions have been dictated by the flood of American home magazines which for years have found a ready place on architects’ bookshelves and in the majority of private homes.’ (Sunday Mail, 9 June 1940, p10.)
² The pages of the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland are littered with reports of interwar Brisbane architects who were studying, travelling or working overseas, and the lectures and papers they wrote on their return. See also Watson and McKay, 1984.
³ “Modern Flat Blocks. Here and Abroad”, pp97-9 in Building, 12 March 1930, p97.
⁴ For an analysis of European apartment building between the wars, refer to Denby, 1944.
⁵ For example, in the interwar years New York embraced the construction of high-rise worker tenements and apartments on a massive scale, culminating in the late 1930s/early 1940s with the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company’s Park Chester development, America’s largest housing project, designed to accommodate 40,000 persons in
The huge working-class apartment complexes constructed in Europe and North America may have provided Australian architects with stylistic inspiration – especially the Modernist movement in architecture as expressed in the new tenement and flat buildings of Europe – but it was the smaller-scale, middle-class flat developments in Britain to which Australian communities could relate most readily.

Anthony Sutcliffe, in his work on the evolution of multi-dwelling buildings in Britain, identified a shift toward the popularity of middle-class flats in England (primarily in London) occurring from the 1920s:

The result was a new type of 'luxury' flat which could appeal to [the] middle-class … [These] removed some of the stigma of the older working-class tenement and made multi-storey living fashionable at precisely the time when suburban sprawl was taking some of the shine off the suburban ideal …

This phase no doubt reached its zenith when the first British ‘royal’ took up flat-dwelling in London in the mid-1930s (as reported in the Brisbane Courier-Mail by the paper's London correspondent):

The King's sister, princess Victoria, who has been living for several years in Buckinghamshire, has taken an eight-roomed flat in Cumberland Mansions, Seymour place, W., which she has furnished throughout in the modern style. I believe she will be the first Royal flat-dweller in London, and her arrival shows how the flat habit is spreading. As a matter of fact, a large number of the 'upper ten' have given up their big town houses and gone into luxury flats.

Associated with sophistication, glamour, and cosmopolitanism, the fashionableness of British interwar middle-class flats was exported via magazines, newspapers, popular literature, film and personal experience, and constituted an important influence in Australia’s acceptance of flat-living (refer to Chapter 8). The corollary to this ‘glamorising’ of the flat lifestyle was that Australian architects could design flat buildings confident that there was a growing sector of the community for which flat-living was becoming desirable, even aspiratory.

51 high-rise apartment houses, on a 129-acre (52 hectares) site in The Bronx (Building, 24 December 1937, p89 and 24 February 1940, p92).
6 Sutcliffe, p17.
They were also able to draw inspiration from the concepts being developed in the design and construction of British working-class flats. So much work was being done in this area in the interwar years that it would be surprising if concepts relating to the size of rooms and the provision of light, air and services were not reflected in the work of Australian designers of flat buildings. Publications such as H. Ingham Ashworth’s Flats. Design and Equipment (London, 1936) and Bernard Friedman’s compilation Flats. Municipal and Private Enterprise (London, 1938) were widely circulated, and Australian journals such as Building published articles, illustrations and comment on recent British flat developments. 8

Probably the greatest advantage for Australian architects in studying overseas flats was to learn from the mistakes. For example, the planning of many early New York apartments for the affluent left much to be desired. To quote from the foreword to Andrew Alpern’s 1975 historical survey of New York’s luxury apartments:

… how inconvenient the long, narrow halls must have been for entertaining, how scarce the bathrooms and closets, how miserable the servants’ rooms, how far the cooked food had to be carried … 9

Similarly, the editors of Building, never shy of commenting on what they considered to be defects in architectural designs and plans, wrote in relation to luxury flats being erected in Grosvenor Square, London, in 1929:

… while the Englishman up to the present has been noted for the perfection of his home life, so that he and his castle are a byword, he still has something to learn about the modern flat and its arrangement. It will be noticed for instance that in the Grosvenor Square flats here illustrated the irregular shape of the plan is responsible for a serious waste of valuable floor space which the architect thought necessary to obtain sufficient natural light. … A lot of room is expensively taken up by large halls in the centre whilst more space is devoted to a central area. … 10

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8 Ashworth, 1936; Bernard Friedman (comp.), Flats. Municipal and Private Enterprise, London: Ascot Gas Water Heaters Ltd, 1938. See also articles such as ‘Recent Flats in London and Their Prices’ pp49-50, 61, 63, 65, 73 in Building, 12 June 1936 and illustrations of ‘Tottenham Court Flats’ in Building, 11 October 1919, pp66-7 – the layout of the flats being considered ‘at once ingenious and effective’.


10 Building, 12 January 1929, p81.
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
Professional influences

Sydney’s experience
Sydney architects had the advantage of their Brisbane colleagues, having handled commissions for large flat developments nearly a decade before the first purpose-built flats were constructed in Brisbane. From the 1920s they were setting out blueprints for successful flat projects. These were based in part on the need to adequately provide for public hygiene and amenity in accordance with local council regulations, but also reflected what flat-dwellers now were demanding in a well-designed and well-equipped residential flat. With flats becoming more widely accepted in the 1920s as permanent places of abode, a contributor to Building in mid-1929 argued that:

The golden rule to be observed is for architects and builders to bear in mind that a flat is more than a substitute for a house, but should be a house complete in itself, with all its essentials of privacy, the grouping of various parts as a suite, and facilities for entertainment.11

From the late 1910s the Sydney journal Building took a prominent role in promoting good flat design in Australia. Adopting a pragmatic view that flats were a necessity of modern life, the journal was significant in driving the architectural profession’s call nationally for an end to poorly-designed flats and resultant degraded living conditions. First published in September 1907 as Building and Real Estate and soon widely circulated in Australia, Building became the nation’s premier architectural, building and engineering journal of the interwar period. Notes from every state were included, filling a void in Queensland prior to publication of the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland from mid-1922. The principal contributors were the owner and editor, journalist George A. Taylor, and his wife Florence M. Taylor, one of Australia’s first female architects.12

Florence Taylor was a protagonist for the construction of well-designed flat buildings. Although a firm believer in eugenics and promoter of the detached house and garden as the preferred venue for the raising of healthy Australian families, she recognise that the well-designed flat could satisfy a growing new residential market in modern urban environments. Her objective was to encourage not only good architectural design in flat

11 ‘Flat Buildings. Why They Are Justified’ in Building, 13 May 1929, p57.
12 After George’s accidental death in January 1928 his wife assumed the editorship of Building in association with Jack Cavanagh, a prominent Brisbane architect (Building, 13 February 1928, pp44-72 [tributes to George Taylor]; Watson and McKay, 1984, p47; ‘Journalist’s Death. Mr George A. Taylor’ in West Australian, 21 January 1928, p19).
buildings, but to promote design that catered for family life. She cited model community apartment projects in Europe where ‘an attempt has been made to combine its conveniences with provisions for family promotion’; and referenced American examples of flat complexes designed as urban villages conducive to family life.13

These overseas models often contained hundreds of high-rise flats. Taylor did not argue for these to be replicated in Australia; they were not required here, given the comparatively small proportion of the metropolitan population residing in flats in the 1920s and 1930s. What she wished to convey was the need to design flats that provided more than a ‘bed-sit’ and could house working-class families comfortably. The problem with this concept was that flats in Australia were most successful where they were associated with middle-class lifestyles. In Brisbane, for example, the working classes were flocking en masse to the new outer suburbs filled with detached, owner-occupied housing erected under government assistance.

Where Taylor was most influential nationally was in promoting the finer details of flat design: emphasising the importance of ‘fine open rooms and every facility for the comfort of the housewife and staff’; warning against flats ‘diminutive in size’; and chastising local governments for approving the construction of poorly-designed flats. She called for flats to be equipped with ‘goods and passenger lifts, proper bell systems, delivery systems, hot water services, ventilating systems, vacuum cleaning, incinerators, refrigeration plants and oscillating wall bed’ – modern conveniences which in a block of flats could be provided cost-effectively and reduce the need for domestic help, which was becoming prohibitively expensive.

Taylor’s writings illustrate the breadth of the resources from which Australian architects were gathering information about international flat developments, especially American and British architectural journals. From these, the Taylors sourced pictures and articles for reproduction in Building and other of George Taylor’s Sydney publications. In addition, new Sydney and Melbourne flat developments were featured regularly, keeping Brisbane architects abreast of the latest in Australian flat design, construction and equipping.

Local advocates

Via access to national and international trade and professional journals and overseas travel, Brisbane’s interwar architects, engineers and town planners were exposed to the latest trends in the construction of multiple-dwelling buildings. They understood the importance of good design, planning, site and location in making or marring a successful flat development. In turn, they sought to influence the nature of Brisbane flat developments via education and example, in a concerted effort to improve the standard of flats in Brisbane. Through local publications such as the *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland* and in the weekly Building and Real Estate columns in the local press, the architectural profession promoted model flat designs produced locally, interstate and overseas.

At face value, these were articles and reports promoting the economic advantages to be gained in designing and constructing good-quality flat developments. They were pro-development and geared toward bolstering the construction industry and the survival of the architectural profession in Brisbane. However, in the process, and seemingly quite deliberately, architectural and construction ground-rules were being established for modern flat developments that could provide adequately for the health and comfort of occupants while making a positive contribution to the townscape. To quote one contributor to the *Sunday Mail* in 1939:

> Nowadays ... architects are seeking to gain the maximum of light and air for all sections of the buildings. Modern materials and architectural standards are providing comfort and finishings that will ensure easy cleanliness in the better class of flats, and, above all, design is helping in this unofficial campaign for better flats.14

One of the first local efforts at formulating ground-rules for successful flat developments was published in the *Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland* in October 1933.15 With the building industry recovering after the devastating effects of the economic depression of the previous three years, and purpose-built flat construction being in the vanguard of the revival in the domestic construction industry (refer to Chapter 5), guidelines for successful flat developments needed to be established. The author was probably the editor of the journal, architect J.V.D. Coutts.16

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14 ‘Unusual Design for New Flats at New Farm’ (description of Elron Court Flats) in *Sunday Mail*, 7 May 1939, p27.
16 The firm of R. Coutts and Sons, of which J.V.D. Coutts was the principal from 1916, designed a number of Brisbane flat buildings in the 1930s, including *Filma* (1934) at Dutton Park, Clarence Court (1936) at South Brisbane and Gloria...
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
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In addition to arguing for aesthetically-designed suburban flat buildings, the article identified two key attributes of a successful flat development: site selection; and the provision of sufficient access to light and air for every flat. Small, level sites with a frontage of about 66 feet (20m) and a depth of about 132 feet (40m) – the dimensions of an average 32 perch (809m²) suburban allotment – were recommended and corner allotments, facilitating access to light and air, were considered preferable. New developments on land parcels of this size were restricted to small-scale blocks (four to eight flats was standard), so overcrowding both within a building and within the suburb would be avoided. Successful flat developments also offered views, and the advantages of constructing flats overlooking parks, gardens and playing fields, or elevated with pleasant vistas and breezes, could not be overestimated.

Standards such as the above were often reinforced by local architects in the promotional material that appeared in the local print media whenever an expensive new block of Brisbane flats was completed. Consider the following description of San Remo Flats (1934) at South Brisbane, designed by E.P. Trewern:

The character of the apartments, pictured here, is refreshing in its originality, preserving as it does the suburban and domestic character so essential for the housing of several distinct families .... The aim in the design of the suburban apartment house is that fresh air, sunlight, and attractive landscape settings be the natural concomitants, as are such essentials in the good class suburban private residence. 'San Remo', illustrated, enjoys these privileges, ... Situated as it is on the heights of the south side, within close reach of the city, it commands for each separate apartment interesting and extensive panoramic views of the City of Brisbane and the garden reaches. Each of 'San Remo's' apartments is well lighted naturally, and is capable of receiving the cool prevailing summer breezes. 17

In the 1930s several of Brisbane’s younger architects became involved in the unofficial campaign to control the quality of the city’s new flat developments. For example, early in 1934 D.F. Cowell-Hamilton, a Brisbane-trained architect who had established his own practice here in 193118, published an article in the local press in which he argued

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Court (1938) at Spring Hill (BCC, building approval no. 26,947 (30 May 1934); Courier-Mail, 4 May 1934, p19, 13 November 1934, p9, 30 July 1935, p6, 26 July 1938, p17; Telegraph, 10 September 1935, p15, 7 April 1936, p8; Watson & McKay, 1984, p60).

17 ’Modern Suburban Apartments’ in Sunday Mail, 3 June 1934, p20.

© Helen Bennett
Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 197
that successful modern flat developments should emphasise ‘spaciousness and comfort’, ‘ample windows of the right aspect’, and excellent appointments:

Money spent on a bathroom and kitchen is never lost and makes an instant appeal to an orderly tenant. Built-in furniture gives excellent results, and helps towards the rental value of a suite.

All modern conveniences, such as hot water, vacuum cleaning, electric installation, including radio, plugging, refrigeration, house telephone, glass enclosed shower, and tiled bathroom, are becoming essential in the competitive market for good rental flats.19

In the mid-1930s Edward J.A. Weller, who had just set up practice in Brisbane20, took a particularly prominent and active role in the campaign. In a series of articles directed primarily at investors in flat developments and published in the local press and in the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland in 1935, he proposed a formula for ‘the perfect investment’ in which aesthetic quality, good planning and economic viability were of equal significance in a flat-building project.21

Weller sought to promote the type of ‘luxury flat’ which architects and some real estate agents had been hoping to encourage in Brisbane since the 1920s, but which Brisbane investors generally avoided as too great a gamble. Arguing that a successful flat development required meticulous planning and an adequate initial expenditure if a sound return on the investment was to be made (perhaps modelled on an experience of Sydney flats), he enumerated seven essentials for a successful flat development, based on site, location, aesthetic detailing, planning, and provision of services, facilities and public areas (refer to Table 7.1 overleaf).

20 Edward J.A. Weller was a Victorian-born, Sydney-trained architect who worked variously in Queensland and New South Wales in the 1920s and 1930s before establishing a permanent practice in Brisbane in the mid-1930s. In 1935 he was made a Councillor of the Queensland Institute of Architects and the Queensland Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and served as vice-president of the Queensland Chapter 1937-1939 and as president in 1940. He was closely associated with the Brisbane Building Centre Pty Ltd, established in the mid-1930s to hold exhibitions and give public lectures on designing and decorating the modern home, and on modern construction, town planning, etc. (Telegraph, 31 December 1935, p14, 19 May 1936, p23, 22 February 1938, p22; Watson & McKay, 1984, p203).
Weller’s blueprint may have been interpreted on a more modest scale in some of the better-quality flat developments erected in Brisbane in the second half of the 1930s, but he failed to convince developers that ‘high-end’ luxury flats could find a market in Brisbane.

Table 7.1 Edward Weller’s seven essentials for a successful flat development, 1935.22

- Site located in a good class residential sector, quiet at night, unaffected by industrial noise and pollution, with easy access to business and shopping facilities, theatres, restaurants and garaging.
- Allotment facing a park or a corner allotment, ‘so that permanent light and air are assured’.
- Orientation of the building to ensure good exposure of all rooms to sunlight and proper ventilation.
- Aesthetic detailing and good planning, including:
  ... an attractive entrance, entrance halls in each apartment, large rooms, ample cupboard space, well equipped bathroom with tiled floor and walls, fireplace in living room, good hardware and light fittings, walls nicely treated, cross ventilation in bedrooms, kitchen large enough to function efficiently, with full equipment built-in, refrigeration, garbage disposal, dining alcove, full size gas range, built-in ironing board, ample power points, floor and walls sanitary and easily cleaned, and exhaust fan ventilation.
- Provision of extra services such as laundries, storage rooms, food services, package and mail deliveries, maid and cook services, apartment cleaning, window cleaning, furnishing of apartments, soft water supply, vacuum cleaning, convenient electric switches, a telephone in each flat, elevators, switchboard telephone service, utility space, air conditioning and a hot water supply.
- Inclusion of a restaurant, particularly in serviced flats and apartment hotels, but not shops, which ‘usually destroys domestic character’ and would not appeal to tenants willing to pay higher rents.
- Provision of adequate public space such as a generous entrance lobby and gardens.

In the mid-1930s the rate of flat-building in Brisbane intensified (refer to Chapter 5) and while many of the city’s better-class flats were constructed at this period, there were also many that did not meet the standards recommended by architects and town planners for multiple-dwelling buildings. Small investors had been attracted to the flat-market and the results were often disappointing.

In a climate of growing frustration, the Courier-Mail ran an article in mid-1938, warning small investors of the economic pitfalls of erecting inadequate flat developments. The article offered ‘a quick sketch of the economics of flat construction’ so that ‘would-be investors in flats might have a better idea of the problems involved’. The article could be read equally as warning and encouragement to potential investors in flat buildings.

22 ABJQ, 10 October 1935, pp10-12, 14.
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats

Professional influences

The author was probably E.J.A. Weller, because it virtually paraphrased his 1935 blueprint for a successful flat development, although less emphasis was placed on facilities designed to attract the ‘luxury’ end of the market. Rather, the author urged potential developers to analyse the rental market, the physical location, and the nature of the facilities offered in the vicinity, before launching into any flat-building project.23

Local architects paid equal attention to the ubiquitous house conversions, the rate of which also intensified in the 1930s and had become a permanent source of comment in the Building and Real Estate sections of the Brisbane daily newspapers. As was noted in the Courier-Mail in 1937, in an article deploring the conversion of the grand nineteenth-century homes of Brisbane into flats:

By conversion, the character of these once beautiful buildings suffer, and the flats are not first-class. Unless great care is exercised the homesteads take on a bedraggled aspect, and tend to depress the value of real estate in the neighbourhood.24

Converting a house into flats rarely required structural alterations, but the partitioning could be extensive, especially if the objective was to cram as many flats as possible into a building, as illustrated in this 1932 description of a house conversion at Hamilton:

In the course of converting The Nook into flats Mrs Turbayne has closed in the side verandas and divided the large room on the right-hand side of the house by a wooden partition. The original pantry and small vestibule leading into it are situated at the back of the large room. The pantry is now a kitchenette for this flat. Two extra flats have been built in between the arched foundation pillars of the house at the back. ... The balcony Mrs Turbayne has boarded part-way up, and a similar boarding placed round the top of the porch extensions, and, needless to say, this is a great asset to the top floor on a hot evening and as a look-out.25

In attempts to encourage a better type of house conversion, articles and reports on the achievements of local architects in this field appeared regularly. The emphasis was on how houses could be converted cost-effectively into fully-functioning, good-quality, aesthetically-pleasing flats.26

23 ‘Flat-Building For Investment. Economic Aspects To Be Considered. The Demands of Tenants’ in Courier-Mail, 26 July 1938, p17.
26 For example, refer to Courier-Mail, 22 September 1936, p18, 3 November 1936, p20, and 22 December 1936, p18.
A popular and often-promoted method was to raise a high-set timber house to two storeys and infill the ground floor with brick to create a flat on each level. Promotions of this nature usually advised owners to avoid crowding too many flats into the re-development, especially if the flats were intended for families:

By other planning, and at not much more expense, two flats could easily have been built under this house, and the upper floor is capable of being divided into two flats. The owners, however, preferred to avoid the overcrowding of families, even to the extent allowable under the City Council's ordinances. Thus the building comprises merely a flat and a private residence above it.27

Also promoted was the idea of planning for future conversion when erecting a new house, as a means of avoiding later inappropriate alterations. Richard Gailey, for example, one of Brisbane's leading interwar architects, in the mid-1930s constructed as his family home a new two-storeyed house planned for potential conversion into a flat on each level. Gailey was attempting to pre-empt the 'modern trend' for the inappropriate and unsuccessful conversion of larger houses into flats:

As a student of the times in which he lives, Mr Gailey has been oppressed by the sight of the old colonial mansions falling rapidly in the social scale by being converted into flats and serving a purpose for which they were never intended. In their day and generation these beautiful old houses were none too big for the purposes of their owners, but, with changed times, corridors of large rooms became useless, and, in an attempt to turn them to profit, present-day owners have divided these stately homesteads into flats.28

Anticipating future conversion was not confined to larger homes. Modern, modestly proportioned houses might also be designed with the requirements of future flats in mind. For example, in March 1937 the Courier-Mail reported on a small timber house erected at Kangaroo Point and designed by architect D.F.W. Roberts such that it could be converted easily into two flats in order to maximise the economic potential of the property:

A casual observer could hardly be expected to know that by merely completing partitions, where door openings now exist, the house might easily become two flats. If at any time the owners should decide that the property should earn for itself, all that is required would be the addition of another kitchen and bathroom.

27 'Jacked Up His House And Built Flats. Weatherboard Top Harmonises with Brick Beneath' in Courier-Mail, 22 September 1936, p18.
... Care was taken that the original building should have adequate clearance from the side fences so that additions could be made. ... In the event of the conversion of the house, the 'sleep-out' would become the front veranda of one of the flats, and the other flat would have the verandah that already exists.29

Again, the success of these promotions is difficult to assess, given the continued proliferation of inappropriate house conversions (including those with Council approval) through the 1930s and early 1940s (refer to Chapter 3).

29 Courier-Mail, 30 March 1937, p16.
Designing flats

Most of Brisbane’s better-class interwar flat developments were designed by formally-trained architects. Smaller blocks of flats and the popular ‘pair of flats’ sometimes revealed the hand of a builder rather than an architect, but it was rare for developers to expend considerable resources on a block of modern flats without involving the design skills and supervision which a professional architect could bring to the project.

In September 1936 the Architecture and Building Journal of Queensland published a list of Queensland architects and their particular areas of expertise. Most of the prominent architectural firms in Brisbane identified ‘flats’ as one of their specialities (refer to Table 7.2 below). The partnership of C.W. Chambers and E.M. Ford (1920-1951) was particularly prolific in this field during the 1930s and early 1940s.30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alexander, WC</th>
<th>Longland, AT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box 95 M, GPO, City.</td>
<td>Colonial Mutual Building, Queen St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahern, JJ</td>
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<td>Boden, EH</td>
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<td>Watson Chambers, Queen St, City.</td>
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<td>Cavanagh and Cavanagh</td>
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<td>Courier Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>National Mutual Buildings, Queen St, City.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chambers and Ford</td>
<td>Ryan, ET</td>
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<td>Equitable Life Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>Brisbane Permanent Bank, Queen St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collin, JM</td>
<td>Rylance, M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank of Australasia Chambers, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>Bank of Australasia Chambers, Queen St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coutts, R and Sons</td>
<td>Shaw, RA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodak Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>Commercial Bank Chambers, Queen St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cullen, FL</td>
<td>Trewern, EP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T and G Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>Heindorf House, Queen St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cummings, RP</td>
<td>Weller, EJA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Mutual Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>Kelvin House, Adelaide St, City.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffin, CH</td>
<td>Wilson, RM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable Life Building, Queen St, City.</td>
<td>City Buildings, Edward St, City.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 Flats known to have been designed by Chambers and Ford include: Hamel (1931), Everton (1932), Ardmore (1932), Acton (1933), Winborne (1933), Cheyne (1933), Glena (1934), Ainslie (1934), Ardrossan (1934), Allambie (1935), Aville Court (1936), Belvedere (1936), Edgecliffe Court (1937), Braemar (1938), Eiron Court (1939), flats at 25 Abbott Street (1938), maisontettes at 14-16 Turner Ave (1940) at New Farm; Raven Court (1935), Everston Court (1937), Merivale (1939) and Corio (1940) at South Brisbane; Shawn (1935) at Petrie Terrace; and Baysmere (1941) in Fortitude Valley (refer to Appendix 13).

31 ABJQ, September 1936, pp11-3.
Popular styles

In their designs for Brisbane’s interwar flat buildings, particularly the exterior detailing, local architects worked largely with styles popular for domestic architecture. The 1920s was the age of the decorative arts movement (in the 1960s termed ‘Art Deco’) with its emphasis on geometric patterns and vibrant colours. Architects drew inspiration from a variety of cultures and eras that had produced distinctive and often highly decorative architecture. Classical Greece, Tudor England, Spanish Mission North America, Renaissance Italy, and Romanesque Mediterranean all found a place in the interwar flats of Brisbane (refer to Appendix 13), which as early as 1929 were receiving praise for their perceived aesthetic qualities:

Another aspect of the flat question is [that flats are so] utilitarian in appearance as to become ugly in their surroundings. That this need not be so is evident from the number of beautiful flat buildings that have been designed by the architects of Queensland, and erected in and around Brisbane.

In blocks of new flats architects were able to exercise a greater invention and flamboyance in the exterior detailing than was usual in detached dwellings. Due to the larger scale and the use of common entrances there was opportunity to make a strong statement in the streetscape, as exemplified in the Mediterranean exteriors designed by architect George Rae (refer to Fig. 7.1 above).

32 The term ‘Art Deco’ was coined in the 1960s, in reference to the French decorative arts movement showcased at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes held in Paris in 1925, and which subsequently swept the western world, particularly the United States. The movement was characterised by ‘precise and boldly delineated geometric shapes and strong colours’. Originally the emphasis was on individuality and craftsmanship, but in the 1930s the designs and colours were transposed to mass-produced household objects and fabrics. While the application of Art Deco motifs to the decoration of buildings was commonplace, Art Deco was not an architectural style. (Hugh Brigstocke (ed.), The Oxford Companion to Western Art, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p29; Judy Pearsall (ed.), The New Oxford Dictionary of English, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p93; Jane Turner (ed.), The Dictionary of Art, London: Macmillan, 1996, pp519-22.)

33 ‘The Flat Problem’ in Brisbane Courier, 18 June 1929, p11.
There was a mystique, perhaps even fantasy, about living in flats, which was associated with interwar notions of modernity (this is discussed further in Chapter 8). ‘New modern flats’ – the marketing tool of the real estate sector – were presented as modern dwellings for glamorous lifestyles, and many of the buildings in which they were accommodated were reflective of the latest in popular, picturesque styles.

Fig. 7.2 Decorative exteriors of mid-1930s interwar Brisbane flat buildings.

Sth Bris. (Trewern)  Petrie Terrace (Chambers and Ford)  Spring Hill (?designer)  Hamilton (Rylance)

In the 1930s the principles of Modernist architecture, established in Continental Europe in the 1910s, were transposed to Brisbane as streamlined Art Moderne and the minimalism of Functionalist architecture. The new architecture initially found a limited response in Brisbane domestic architecture. The middle classes preferred decorative exteriors for their homes, and the detached, high-set, multi-gabled, timber Queensland bungalow predominated in outer suburbia. As early as the mid-1920s the city of high-set timber houses was noted for its conservatism in house design:

There is nothing seemingly that will move Brisbane’s people out of their old ways in domestic architecture ... Still, the time may come when a conversion in ideas may result.

At present, it is doubtful whether an earthquake would act as a medium for expediting such a change.

On the other hand, there seemed to be a greater community willingness to accept the new architectural forms when they were applied to flat buildings. Chambers and Ford designed a number of blocks of flats influenced by streamlined and Functionalist architecture, and the modern forms appealed to many of the younger architects,

A similar note was struck by a contributor to the Sunday Mail in 1930, deploring the fact that Modernist architecture had been ‘Forestalled by Queensland Custom’ when Brisbane had an urgent need for ‘simple, practical, well designed homes’ which eschewed decoration and anything that wasn’t functional in the design (E.D., ‘The New Architecture. Forestalled by Queensland Custom’ in Sunday Mail, 25 May 1930, p24).
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats

Designing flats

including J.M. Collin, G.A. Blackburne, A.W.F. Bligh, V. Gzell, A.H. Job, C.E. Plant, R.W. Voller and E.J.A. Weller (refer to Appendix 13). Modern, streamlined flat buildings with curved corners and ‘porthole’ windows were associated with the machine age and ultra modernity, and local designers borrowed from a variety of modern architectural and stylistic idioms to create impressive new streamlined flat buildings.

Fig. 7.3 Modernist-inspired Brisbane flat buildings of the late 1930s/early 1940s.

As the 1930s progressed, European Functionalism permeated the design of Brisbane’s purpose-built flats. Very few of the new blocks displayed the design elements of Functionalist architecture in its purest form, but in their solid massing and minimal decorative features, these blocks exhibited a sense of permanence and gave promise of an uncomplicated, uncluttered modern lifestyle. By the 1940s, smart new blocks in face brick with terracotta-tile-clad (sometimes multi-coloured) hipped roofs, wide overhanging eaves, and often a dramatic central entrance, were making a strong impact in Brisbane streetscapes.

Fig. 7.4 The new look of Brisbane flat buildings, early 1940s.

36 For examples of how Art Moderne was interpreted in Australia, refer to Charles Pickett ‘Blue-collar bars’ pp 108-12 and Nanette Carter ‘Milk bar moderne’ pp 120-7 in Stephen, Goad and McNamara, 2008.
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Working with Council ordinances

As discussed in Chapter 4, Brisbane City Council sought to control the quality of interwar flats (of all forms) via ordinances regulating the construction and registration of flat buildings. These established the parameters within which architects and designers needed to work, and affected the purpose-built blocks in terms of site coverage, height, construction materials, the size of rooms, fire-resistance, sound-proofing, and so forth. While it is not the intention in this chapter to analyse in detail the impact of the ordinances on the design of flat buildings, there were a number of distinctive aspects in the planning and design of Brisbane’s interwar flats which came about as a direct result of specific local government ordinances.

Site coverage and height

Among the most influential of the regulations were those affecting site coverage and height. From October 1926, when the first ordinances relating specifically to flat buildings came into force, blocks of more than three storeys were restricted to a site coverage of 50 per cent, and if under three storeys or of a greater number of storeys but possessing a common flat roof, could occupy up to two-thirds of the site. There were also provisions determining the distance of flat buildings from side boundaries of allotments in dedicated residential areas, this distance increasing with the number of storeys. When the ordinances were amended in 1937, no flat building in a residential area could exceed 50 cent of the land area (this included garages and outbuildings), although single-storey outbuildings (such as a laundry or shed) could be excluded from the site coverage. Furthermore, from 1926 all flat buildings were required to have an open backyard extending across the entire width of the site.  

Given that most of Brisbane’s purpose-built blocks of flats were erected in residential areas, developers and investors tended to maximise use of a site by restricting development to no more than three storeys, set within a small garden and rear yard, often with a shared, single-storeyed laundry detached from the main block of flats. Garages, being included in the site area, were often restricted in number, which in part accounted for the popularity of sites close to public transport.

There was an exception regarding garages, which took into account Brisbane’s hilly topography and favoured construction on sloping sites. From 1926, any single-storeyed, flat-roofed garage, the roof of which could be used as part of the garden, yard or court, was not included in the site coverage in flat-building projects.  

**Fig. 7.5 Examples of interwar Brisbane flats with garages built to the street alignment.**

While this enabled developers to maximise site coverage and at the same time provide garaging for tenants, in some instances there was a reduction in visual amenity at street level, with rows of garages cut into the street frontages of sloping sites (refer to the examples in Fig. 7.5 above). Little evidence of the use of this provision is found in Brisbane’s purpose-built flats of the 1920s, but from the mid-1930s, as access to private automobiles grew and more and more flats were being erected in the hilly suburbs of Bowen Hills, Clayfield, Highgate Hill and Hamilton, the incidence of street-front private garaging in flat-building developments rose significantly.

Occasionally Brisbane’s interwar suburban flats exceeded the usual two or three-storeys. Cliffside Flats (1937) at Kangaroo Point, for example, comprised seven flats in five storeys. The location and nature of the site, probably accounted for the higher number of storeys. Although the main access was off narrow Ellis Street (Council did not encourage flat construction on sites with frontages to narrow streets), the site occupied a very steep slope on the cliff above the coal wharves, did not overlook other buildings in front, and would appear as a three-storeyed building from Ellis Street.

When completed, Cliffside occupied ‘a commanding position … overlooking two reaches of the Brisbane River and the Domain and Botanic Gardens.’

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38 QGG, 2 October 1926, CXXVII:87, p1234.  
39 Courier-Mail, 13 July 1937, p18.
More generous site coverage rules in designated non-residential areas permitted the construction of developments such as Astor Court Flats (1934) at Spring Hill, a four-storeyed structure at the corner of Leichhardt and Wharf Street, comprising shops on the ground floor, three floors of residential flats above and a basement garage.40

Similarly, in 1940 John Hutchinson, a prominent Brisbane contractor, erected a three-storeyed, L-shaped building to the street alignments of Musgrave Road and Confederate Street, Red Hill. The building comprised three floors of residential flats, shops at street level in the Musgrave Road elevation, and a basement flat fronting Confederate Street.41

**Health ordinances**

Brisbane City Council health ordinances had a substantial impact on the nature of the facilities offered in flats, and on the terminology employed to describe some rooms.

Owners of flat buildings and maisonettes were required to obtain an annual certificate of registration in order to conduct their premises as a multiple-occupancy dwelling. The yearly fee for this registration was dependent on the number of registrable rooms in the premises, which in turn could affect the nature of the accommodation offered in a flat.42

For example, early flats often had a separate kitchen and dining room because kitchens were not included in the number of registrable rooms until after amendments to the licensing laws were made in 1930. Many 1930s flats then resorted to a ‘kitchenette’ off the dining room or living room, or alternatively, a kitchen with a ‘dining alcove’, in order to reduce the number of registrable rooms per flat. Again, while some flats offered a separate living room and dining room, in others the two rooms may have been delineated by a timber ‘arch’ or frieze (as in many interwar detached houses of this period), which could be classified as one room rather than two for registration.

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40 ABJQ, 10 November 1934, p16; BCC, building approval no. 26,380 (25 January 1934); Courier-Mail, 20 October 1933, p7, 17 February 1934, p16; Telegraph, 20 February 1934, p13.
41 BCC, building approval no. 44,315 (25 June 1940).
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purposes. Flat designs incorporating enclosed verandahs were popular, because these were not counted as rooms for registration purposes (unless in use as a sleep-out or living area at the time of Council inspection).

Similarly, a bathroom separate from a water closet was counted as a registrable room, but neither a combined bathroom and water closet, nor a separate water closet, was registrable, which meant that even the better quality flats tended to combine the two. Furthermore, under the 1926 building ordinances, if a flat contained no more than four habitable rooms (for example, bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms), the water-closet could be fixed in the bathroom, whereas it was required to be in a separate compartment if the flat contained five or more habitable rooms.

Working with the local climate

Brisbane architects were keen to prove competency not only in the mastery of the essentials of good flat design, but also in how to accommodate the warm Queensland climate in multiple-dwelling buildings. Access to good ventilation and prevailing breezes was a primary consideration in the design of Brisbane’s better-quality interwar flats, and an added attraction to prospective tenants. So also was the provision of sleep-out verandahs – semi-enclosed with a solid balustrade for privacy on warm summer nights. If casements, blinds or louvres were added above the balustrade, these spaces could be utilised as sitting rooms, sun rooms or bedrooms. Craigston Flats on Wickham Terrace, for example, was designed with semi-open verandahs (some of the flats had three), but these were enclosed subsequently with windows, to create a more controlled environment.43

Or consider the example of Juniper Flats (1937) at Kangaroo Point, designed by architect G.A. Osbaldiston. The building, which contained six large, well-appointed flats, occupied a high position with an easterly aspect and extensive views. Importantly: ‘Prevailing summer breezes both north-easterly and south-easterly, have uninterrupted play, yet protection from the winter westerlies is complete.’ In addition to two bedrooms, each flat was provided with a verandah ‘so placed as to be used as a sleep-out or lounge’ and fitted with ‘special louvre and spring roller blinds built-in.’44

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43 ABJO, 10 December 1926, p46; Brisbane Courier, 9 March 1929, p10.
44 BCC, building approval no.32,950 (28 September 1936); Sunday Mail, 20 June 1937, p25.
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
Types of flats

Brisbane’s purpose-designed new blocks of flats offered a wide range of accommodation – from ‘bachelor flats’ or ‘bed-sits’ to small, modest flats with a minimum of services and facilities, to medium-sized, well-appointed flats and ‘luxury’ flats targeted at the middle-classes, to flats for the high-end of the market. They were found in a variety of formats – from maisonettes and ‘pairs of flats’ to high-rise blocks – and in a variety of building materials.

Drawing from information in Brisbane City Council licensing files for multiple dwelling buildings and from contemporary newspapers and trade journals, it is possible to establish some sense of what these different types of flats offered in terms of number and function of rooms and the quality of the appointments.

Bachelor flats

The most compact of interwar flat types was the ‘bachelor flat’ or ‘flats for business people’, which usually comprised little more than a single bed-sitting room with kitchenette, plus bathroom and water closet. Sydney and Melbourne appear to have had a greater experience of bachelor flats than Brisbane, and it is useful to look at how this particular form of new flat construction was interpreted in those cities.

For example, Marton Hall (1940) in Sydney was designed as a block of 143 flats ‘of the bachelor type containing one main room, kitchen and bathroom’.

Similarly, a block of eight bachelor flats erected in Melbourne in 1940 ‘included in a space about 34ft by 13ft a living room, kitchen, dressing room and bathroom. The living room is designed to be used as a bedroom and is equipped with a folding wall bed’.

The following contemporary description of Cahors (1940), Potts Point, Sydney, delineates the subtle difference between a bachelor flat and a small one-bedroom flat:

Thirty-two of the 64 flats in the building are of the bachelor variety comprising living room, kitchenette, dressing alcove, and bathroom. The remaining 32 are larger and consist of lounge, bedroom, kitchenette, and bathroom.

46 Building, 24 January 1941, p15.
47 Building, 24 May 1940, p36.

The ‘living room’ probably contained a folding or oscillating wall bed, as was popular in one-room flats in North America (see, for example, ‘Tabloid Homes “Three in One” Flats’ in Sunday Mail, 27 May 1923, p12).
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats

Types of flats

Few bachelor flats were purpose-built in Brisbane – or at least, were not advertised as such – and those which have been identified in this study, tended to cross the divide between ‘flat’ and ‘tenement’. For example, when Donegal Flats was erected in 1934 as ‘bachelor flats’ or ‘apartments for business people’, they were described as ‘a novelty to Brisbane’. The two-storeyed brick block on St Paul’s Terrace in Fortitude Valley contained eight apartments, with shared facilities. Technically they were tenements.  

There is evidence that some contemporaries interpreted the bachelor flat as being more than a ‘bed-sit’. Consider the example of Marlborough Hall (1937) in Darlinghurst, Sydney, designed by Emil Soderstein and reputedly modelled on European bachelor flats:

> The planning of this new block of flats ... has been based on the bachelor type of apartment so popular in England and on the Continent, each flat comprising living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and closed-in balcony, the latter lending itself for use as a dining alcove.

In Brisbane the above would have been advertised as one-bedroom flats. For example, the accommodation offered in buildings such as Avalon (1929) and Clifton Court (1941) in New Farm, was not as generous as in the Sydney example, but neither is known to have been referred to or marketed as ‘bachelor flats’ on completion.

Most of Brisbane’s purpose-built flats of the interwar years contained a minimum of three rooms (exclusive of the bathroom and water closet): bedroom, living/dining area and kitchen or kitchenette, and many contained two bedrooms. The majority of one-room dwellings were tenements, with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

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48 BCC, building approvals nos. 26,192 (6 December 1933) and 31,637 (28 April 1936); *Courier-Mail*, 1 December 1933, p4, 18 April 1934, p3.
50 Each of the 26 flats in Avalon comprised a bedroom, separated from the living room either by a curtain or folding doors, a kitchen alcove and a combined bathroom and water closet (refer to Felipe, 2005). The 16 flats in Clifton Court each offered one bedroom, lounge, kitchenette, and a combined shower room and water closet (BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (2)314/38/54-PM670/140).
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats
Types of flats

One-bedroom flats

Few blocks of one-bedroom flats were constructed in Brisbane prior to the late 1930s, the preference being for residential (tenements and ‘serviced rooms’), which often provided a greater return on capital than a block of single-bedroom flats. Avalon Flats (1929) in New Farm was a prominent exception (refer to chapter 10).

Substantial blocks of one-bedroom flats, or in combination with bed-sitting rooms, gained popularity as investments in the late 1930s. Some were furnished, but many were not. For example, Oxley Court Flats (1939) on North Quay, designed by architect E.P. Trewern, comprised 21 self-contained, unfurnished flats, consisting of 9 ‘bed-sits’, 10 one-bedroom and 2 small two-bedroom flats, in a three-storeyed brick block. The flats commanded ‘picturesque views of two reaches of the Brisbane River’ and were within easy walking distance of the city centre. When completed in March-April 1939 they were marketed as ‘ideal modern flats’, priced at 35/- to 40/- per week.51

This type of flat development was not restricted to inner-city locations. Coraki Court (1938), at Clayfield, a three-storeyed brick and reinforced concrete block fronting (New) Sandgate Road, contained 12 generously-sized and well-appointed one-bedroom flats. The block was designed by George Rae in an H-shaped form, to permit maximum light and ventilation, and the flats contained a ‘large living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom and sleep-out to each, all equipped with every modern convenience, including refrigerator and hot water supply.’ 52 Not all suburban single-bedroom flats were as well-appointed or spacious as those in Coraki Court. Clifton Court (1941) in New Farm, for example, was a two-storeyed brick block of 16 tiny flats (each containing bedroom, lounge, kitchenette, and combined shower room and water closet), eight per storey, four either side of a long central corridor, which had external stairs at each end. At the far end on each level there were two common bathrooms and water closets, which the owner kept locked and were not in use.53

51 ABJQ, May 1938, p16; BCC, building approval no.37,723 (29 April 1938); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1814 (7)314/38/54-NL630/293; Courier-Mail, 10 May 1938, p24, 22 April 1939, p125; ‘Plan of Proposed Brick Flats at North Quay for Messrs Carricks Ltd’ (sheets 1-7), Trewern Collection, Job no. 1138 (UQFL239).
52 BCC, building approval no.38,639 (3 August 1938); BCC, Reports and Proceedings, July 1937-June 1938, p1267 (2914/1937-38); Telegraph, 10 May 1938, p19.
53 BCC, building approval no.44,875 (3 September 1940); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (2)314/38/54-PM670/140; Courier-Mail, 18 July 1941, p11.)

© Helen Bennett
Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 213
Modest suburban flats

Exemplifying the more modest suburban flat developments of the interwar period was Roseville Flats in Bowen Street, New Farm, designed by architect J.H. Burley and erected in 1929 at a cost of £1,800. This long, narrow, two-storeyed block of four flats, two per floor, was timber-framed and clad with fibrous-cement sheeting. As illustrated in Fig. 7.9, the flats were mirror-imaged on each level, and the layout was replicated on both floors. As a soundproofing measure the shared wall between the front and back flats (affecting only the bathrooms) was of ‘coke-breeze’ block (similar to concrete block). A small court along the southern side of the building accommodated external stairs (not shown in the plan) to the upper flats.54

Each flat contained two bedrooms, enclosed verandah and kitchen – all opening off a central living room – and a combined bathroom and water closet accessed off the kitchen. The verandah in each upper-floor flat could be used as a sitting room or sleep-out, but those on the lower level served as entrance vestibules. The rooms were modestly-sized: the living room, for example, was 12ft (3.6m) square. However, ceilings throughout were a generous 10ft (3m) high. In the backyard there was a separate weatherboard building containing two garages and a shared laundry.55

Roseville Flats provided quintessential compact living for two or three adults, or two adults and a child. As rentals they satisfied the lower end of the suburban flat market, being neither ‘luxury’ flats nor bachelor flats, nor of the standard of the typical brick and concrete blocks.

54 The design was approved by the City Architect in 1929 despite the lack of provision of fire escape stairs, presumably because fibrous-cement sheeting was considered a fire-resisting material (BCC, building approval no.18,372 (11 March 1929)). In the 1930s, Council required the owner to construct fire escapes (BCA1800 314/38/54-PM110/20).
55 Plan dated 1 February 1929 in BCA1800 314/38/54-PM110/20.
Better-class suburban flats

A popular form of suburban development was the block of four to six flats, each usually of two bedrooms, well-constructed in brick or concrete or a mix of both, and well-appointed. They were designed to attract a good class of tenants, offering a sense of glamour and sophistication without the additional size, finishes, fittings and correspondingly high rent of the ‘luxury’ flats. Table 7.3 below provides examples of the nature of the accommodation offered in this type of development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.3 Examples of better-class Brisbane interwar suburban flat buildings.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheyne (1933), Spring Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘The building, which will be of two stories, will contain modern self-contained flats of two bedrooms, large lounge, kitchen, tiled bathroom, and sleep-out verandah. The whole will be surmounted by a mottled tile roof. In the planning the flats have been grouped around a central entrance and external stairways have been eliminated. Ample garage accommodation has been provided for each flat.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Brisbane Courier, 23 June 1933, p4.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects: Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner: E.A. Iliff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. storeys: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. flats: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated cost: £1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliston (1934), Bowen Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Just Completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 min. from section stop, elevated fine outlook. Two upstairs flats, unfurnished, each containing 2 bedrooms, lounge, dining-room, modern kitchen &amp; bathroom, balcony, sleep-out verandah. All rooms tastefully papered, polished floors. Rentals, 52/6 &amp; 55/6, including refrigeration &amp; garage.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Courier-Mail, 23 May 1934, p22.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect: W. Shardlow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner: E.J.T. Manchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. storeys: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. flats: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated cost: £2,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filma (1934), Dutton Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The building will be of two stories, each containing two flats, separated by soundproof brick walls. Each flat will consist of a living room, 18ft x 12ft, two bedrooms, 13ft x 10ft 6in, bathroom, 11ft x 8ft, and a kitchen 10ft 6in x 9ft 6in. ... Four garages, a complete laundry, and separate lavatories are provided. Each flat will have an 8ft balcony to the front and a service balcony at the rear. The flats will have polished hardwood floors, ceilings of fibrous plaster, while the inside walls will be of plaster and the outside will be texture finished.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Courier-Mail, 4 May 1934, p19.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect: R. Coutts and Sons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner: R.F. Stephens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. storeys: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. flats: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated cost: £2,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halcyon (1939), West End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ATTRACTIVE, newly-built, brick flats, high, easterly aspect, refrigeration, hot water, tiled bathroom, self-contained, 2 bedrooms, on tramline.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Courier-Mail, 25 March 1939, p95.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects: Job &amp; Collin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner: J. Davidson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. storeys: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. flats: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated cost: £2,948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Luxury’ flats

Brisbane also attracted many high-quality, suburban, brick and concrete blocks, described at the time as ‘luxury’ flats. The trend was established in the early 1920s with the construction of Simla Flats (1921) and Langshaw Flats (1922) at New Farm and was sustained through the study period. These developments tended to be of two or three storeys, and although the average flat of this type was of two bedrooms with a sleep-out verandah (refer to Table 7.4 for examples), some offered a range of one, two or three bedroom flats, all of which retained a high standard of appointments.

Table 7.4 Examples of interwar Brisbane ‘luxury’ flats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flat Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Estimated cost:</th>
<th>No. bedrooms per flat:</th>
<th>No. flats:</th>
<th>No. storeys:</th>
<th>Owner/Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foxthorn Court (1927), New Farm</td>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>£5,400</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr W.E. &amp; Mrs M.J. Fox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronet (1933), New Farm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Max Strickland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Remo (1934), South Brisbane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr J.A. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina Court (1939), Highgate Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘High-end’ flats

While no Brisbane interwar flat development rivalled Sydney’s luxury penthouses in terms of size, number of rooms, finishes and appointments (refer to Chapter 8), a few up-market flats offered tenants a very comfortable lifestyle, equivalent to a modern interwar middle-class home without the garden to tend. Craigston Flats on Wickham Terrace (discussed in Chapter 5) was the Brisbane exemplar of this type, but another particularly fine block was found in Carrington Flats (1934) at the corner of Gregory Terrace and Warr Street in Spring Hill, overlooking Victoria Park.

The three-storeyed, rendered brick structure with its Mediterranean exterior was designed by George Rae, and contained just three flats, one per floor, identical in layout. Each comprised three bedrooms, a large combined dining-lounge, separate kitchen with French doors opening to the dining room, two glassed-in verandahs or sun-rooms, an internal access hallway with built-in linen press, a combined bathroom and water closet, a private laundry, and tradesmen’s stairs off the kitchen. The smallest of the bedrooms, with direct access to the rear stairs, may have been a maid’s room. Main access was via a common stairwell off Warr Street, with an attractive street entrance. (The present entrance from Gregory Terrace was added in the mid-1970s, when the ground floor was converted into a doctor’s surgery.)

The rooms were generously-sized for a Brisbane flat development: the main bedroom, for example, was a comfortable 12ft by 14ft (3.6m by 4.2m), and the combined living and dining room, located along the south-east side of the building with windows overlooking Spring Hill and Fortitude Valley, measured 13ft wide by 26ft long (3.9m by 7.8m). Ceilings throughout were 10ft (3m) high. The owners of Carrington, Mr and Mrs Macarthur, resided in one of the flats for many decades, and rented the other two flats to middle-class professionals.

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56 ABJQ, 10 July 1933, p23; BCC, building approval no. 25,659 (1 August 1933); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1627 (2)314/38/54-NN240/445; Brisbane Courier, 11 August 1933, p7 and 1 September 1933, p4.
57 BCC, file BCA1627 (2)314/38/54-NN240/445; QPOD, 1935-1940.
Flat-houses
While many blocks of interwar flats were designed to make a dramatic statement in the streetscape, there was an alternative fashion for the two or three-flat building which gave the appearance of being a large private residence (refer to Figure 7.11 below for examples). They usually demonstrated an exterior asymmetry and often a discreetly separate entrance to each flat. Many of the identified flats of this form were well-appointed brick buildings.

Fig. 7.11 Examples of Brisbane flat-houses of the 1930s/early 1940s.

Maisonettes and pairs of flats
As discussed in Chapter 5, maisonettes and the ubiquitous ‘pair of flats’ were enormously popular as investments in the 1930s, and more so when war-time conditions restricted larger flat developments in the 1940s.58

Most Brisbane maisonettes of this period comprised two single-storey houses under one bungalow roof. They shared a common party wall not visible above the roofline, but each had a separate entrance and usually a separate yard, and functioned as semi-detached housing. They were mostly mirrored-imaged in plan and elevation, and were often of good quality in their construction, materials and decorative detailing. While blending into suburban streetscapes, they were still recognisable as multiple-dwelling buildings.

Fig. 7.12 Examples of Brisbane maisonettes of the late 1930s/early 1940s.

58 See, for example, ‘Maisonettes in the Nearer Suburbs’ in Courier-Mail, 10 December 1940, p16.
Some maisonettes were of an asymmetric design, similar to the better-class of maisonettes popularised in southern Australian cities, and from the street appeared as a single residence (as discussed above under ‘Flat-houses’).

Maisonettes were usually held on one title (or under the one ownership) and, as multiple-dwelling buildings, were subject to the same local licensing ordinances as flats. This accounted for the constant confusion between ‘maisonettes’ and ‘pair of flats’ in Brisbane City Council registers, in submissions made to the Council by architects, builders and owners, and in newspapers, magazines and journals.

A ‘pair of flats’ in Brisbane at this period displayed many of the characteristics of maisonettes. They were usually single-storeyed and shared a common party wall under a single roof. There were some two-storeyed pairs of flats with one flat to each floor, but these were less common. Like maisonettes, pairs of flats had separate entrances. The principal characteristic distinguishing a pair of flats from maisonettes was that the yard remained common (although some maisonettes also shared a common yard, contributing to the confusion).

Pairs of flats also tended to be more modest structures than maisonettes. Dozens of high-set, timber-framed pairs of flats clad with weatherboards or fibrous-cement were constructed throughout Brisbane in the 1930s and early 1940s, barely distinguishable from the acres of timber-framed detached houses which filled the interwar suburbs. They tended to be unadventurous in design and modest in terms of size, materials, finishes and appointments, but maintained the suburban character.

![Fig. 7.13 Cambus-kenneth, Hamilton, 2002.](image)

(In the 1930s, James McWhirter and his wife occupied one half, and his mother-in-law, Mrs Atkins, the other.)

![Fig. 7.14 Examples of Brisbane ‘pairs of flats’ of the 1930s/early 1940s.](image)

59 Refer to Building, 12 October 1932, p37.
Finishing flats

In the finishes and decoration, Brisbane’s modern interwar flats demonstrated the latest in materials, colours and designs. The aesthetic quality of interiors could be a significant marketing factor, especially among the better-class developments, which competed to attract the more affluent tenant. By the 1930s, architects were keenly aware of the need to finish flats with serviceable materials and in colours that would complement a range of tenant preferences in furniture. Consider the following description of Taishan Flats (1936) at Bowen Hills:

The chief feature of the interior decoration is the durex wall panelling, which, with different colourings and textures, has been used throughout all rooms. All colours in the wall treatments have been chosen to harmonise with any colour scheme that a tenant may favour. These treatments range from bronze panels in the lounge and dining rooms to deep cream in the bedrooms and two-tone soft greys in the kitchen harmonising with the colour of the electric stoves. Throughout the floors are of polished red lustre, the exception being the bathrooms, which are floored in inlaid terrazzo.\(^60\)

Again, Edgecliffe Court (1936) at New Farm, in which each flat had ‘as much accommodation as a fair-sized house’, was finished in a modern, streamlined fashion:

Sunk panel plaster ceilings are in every room, and single panel doors have been used. Floors are machine-polished red stringey. ... The lounge, dining and front bedroom in each case have glass doors opening on to a spacious side veranda. ... The bathrooms are spacious, have mosaic floors, and are tiled in colours. Baths, wash basins, and suites also match in colour.\(^61\)

Wall papers were popular finishes in many flats, and by no means restricted to the luxury flats. Lumeah Court (1937) at West End, for example, was a nicely finished and detailed mid-range flat development:

All the principal rooms are wall-papered, the kitchens have ample cupboards, beside the sink and stove, and the floors of the bathrooms are being rendered clean and hygienic by marbled Hercules flooring.

Both the main entrance hall and staircase are spacious, and well lit by the Georgian leadlight windows which lend an air of distinction both internally and externally.\(^62\)

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60 Sunday Mail, 20 September 1936, p10.
61 Sunday Mail, 4 April 1937, p27.
62 Courier-Mail, 29 December 1936, p18.

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Finishing flats

Colour in flats had to be handled carefully. Walls of neutral colours were favoured: softer colour schemes made small rooms appear larger and gave scope to occupants to decorate with furniture and furnishings in colours of their choice. As flat-builders in Brisbane found in 1939:

Care always has to be exercised in the planning and selection of interior decoration and finish. The flow of tenants, with their varying wishes and desires in furnishing, makes this necessary.

It has been found by builders of permanent blocks of flats that a neat, neutral background is the best finish, so that the furnishings of all tenants may fit easily and well into the rooms.

Plaster and modern wall board, natural finish, or hung with neatly patterned papers of creams, light maizes, and other neutral shades, usually is selected for walls of main rooms. Ceilings are plastered or sheathed with wall boards.63

Hampton Court (1938) at Clayfield demonstrated many of the above characteristics. A large block of 12 well-appointed, two-bedroom flats and a roof-top penthouse, designed in a modern, streamlined style by E.J.A. Weller, the interiors were appropriately modern. Each built-in kitchen featured a large terrazzo work bench, and the bathrooms, appointed with separate bath and shower, were ‘colour-tiled’, but the remainder of the finishes were neutral:

Rooms are plain in finish in the modern manner and lend themselves to almost any scheme of furnishing. Wall-papers, which are of a type specially made for apartment use, are washable and appropriately subdued in colour.64

Blairmore Flats (1938) at New Farm similarly demonstrated a neutral decor:

The main colour scheme throughout is cream in the lounges, and ... biscuit shade, in the bedrooms. The kitchen is also cream, picked out in ivory in certain points. Fibrous plaster ceilings of artistic designs play an important part in the picturesque appearance of the rooms. The owner has shown considerable taste in the finishing off of the different rooms, which must play a very important part in attracting prospective tenants. ... The electrical fittings are also noticeable on account of their modern design and artistic colourings. The flooring also suggests the highest quality of timber, efficiently polished, and forming an ideal base for rugs, carpets, etc. ... The bathroom is tiled, and has terrazzo flooring ... 65

63 ‘£70,000 On Flats Last Year’ in Courier-Mail, 12 March 1940, p16.
64 Sunday Mail, 10 July 1938, p33.
65 Sunday Mail, 15 May 1938, p16.
Furnishing flats

A key attraction of the modern flat was its compactness and convenience, which concomitantly placed demands on tenants, owners, designers, interior decorators and manufacturers to embrace new ways of thinking about furnishing and decorating the compact home. With the growing popularity of the flat came new fashions and trends in furniture design, fabrics and utensils, particularly evident in the advent of multi-functional and built-in furniture.

With the exception of elaborate luxury flats found in cities such as New York and London, economy of space was the principal determinant in the design of flat developments world-wide. In their planning for small suburban flats, Brisbane architects drew from overseas and interstate examples in which space was used economically, with the added utility of built-in furniture.

A primary source of inspiration for the fitting-out of early Australian flats resided in the experience of the United States, where cities like New York had been experimenting and consolidating with various forms of flat developments since the 1860s. The American ‘flat system of living’ may have horrified interwar Australia in terms of the scale of the developments, but impressed in the array of novel and inventive features evoked in the planning and equipping of the compact modern flat. Consider, for example, the space-solving solutions adopted in the Surf Apartment Hotel, Chicago, which in 1920 represented ‘the latest in flat-design and construction’:

... wall-beds and closets of various descriptions have been introduced, but the closet into which the bed is folded is a dressing room with dresser, table, wardrobe and the usual accessories. The man’s wardrobe is especially noted, as it is ingeniously contrived with a sliding shelf for the shaving implements and by the use of hinged doors which fall down and form tables, lockers are provided for folded clothes.

From Britain and Continental Europe were drawn more sophisticated examples of the new approach to furnishing flats:

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Modern furniture has been created by the needs of modern life, for flats instead of vast houses, and its clever use can increase enormously the size and beauty of the smallest room. Take bookcases alone. I remember one, in the house of a well-known English architect, which (sunk into the cream wall) made a decorative strip of colour and left the smooth line up to the flush veneered door. On the other side of the room was a large combination table in cream cellulosed woodwork, on the top of which I gathered he drew his designs, and from out of which came cocktail glasses and cigarettes on revolving doors. .... In a flat in Paris I saw a room with a lovely curved wall, whose polished wood had every excuse to be purely ornamental, and not only did a writing desk hide behind the smooth panels, but a gramophone, a telephone, and a radio.68

**Built-in furniture**

There were two schools of thought about built-in furniture in interwar flats. On the one hand, ‘built-ins’ provided convenient storage space in small rooms which could not comfortably accommodate large pieces of furniture such as wardrobes, storage cabinets and kitchen dressers. They were an added attraction for tenants, and were popular with owners because they reduced the amount of furniture being taken in and out of a building and therefore lessened the potential for damage to walls, doorways and stairwells.69 On the other hand, built-in furniture could be considered as an impediment to occupants who wished to furnish their own flat. As a contemporary wrote in 1934:

> Built-in furniture and cupboards are debatable subjects, as the choice of the person who is responsible for their positions may not coincide with those who come after. Further, unless the cupboards are quite impervious to vermin, they may be regarded with suspicion.70

In Brisbane, it would seem that most of the designers of interwar flats were swayed by the first argument, vying to include useful storage in their designs, possibly drawing inspiration from publications such as *Building*, which regularly featured articles and reports on the detailing and services provided in Sydney flats.71 Brisbane architect Edward Weller argued for:

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69 *Building*, 13 May 1929, p57.
71 For example, a 1933 flat development at Bondi – similar in scale and design to many Brisbane flats of this era – included some impressive built-in features and cabinetry, especially in the kitchenette, which was fitted with ‘a small enamel stove, enamel sink with terrazzo draining board, a collapsible enamel table top ... a couple of seats with lift-up
... flats so fully equipped with built-in furniture that scarcely anything is left for the tenant to purchase. It is this provision of built-in equipment that allows space to be used so efficiently that every modern facility for comfortable living can be provided within an area that would have been pronounced absurdly inadequate just a very short time ago.\(^\text{72}\)

Built-in cabinetry was popular in Brisbane’s new modern flats, although rarely of the refinement of some European and Sydney interiors. While still quite traditional in concept, one of the more accomplished Brisbane interwar flat fit-outs was that created by Cavanagh and Cavanagh in their design for Taishan Flats (1936) in Bowen Hills:

> Numerous built-in cupboards have been provided. They include lead-lighted china cabinets in the lounge and dining rooms, a handy little wall cabinet for toilet preparations in the bedrooms (which otherwise are apt to litter a dressing table), medicine and shaving cabinets (divided by a mirror) in the bathrooms, and a cupboard for suitcases in the hall.

> The kitchens are also fitted with useful cupboards, and on the back verandas are cupboards for the convenience of tradesmen. On the back landings, also, are openings leading to a rubbish chute, and on the top floor a hoist for furniture is located. A unique detail in each flat is a large linen press, lined and shelved with camphor wood, which, besides being insect-proof, imparts a distinctive scent to everything stored in it.\(^\text{73}\)

Perhaps one of the more inventive designers in this field was Elina Mottram, the first female architect to establish her own practice in Brisbane (1924-1925), before moving to Longreach and then Rockhampton.\(^\text{74}\) Her design for Scott House Flats (1925) at Kangaroo Point is notable for its attention to built-in cabinetry, as is recorded in the entry in the Queensland Heritage Register for these early Brisbane flats:

> There are generous amounts of built-in storage in all rooms. An entire wall of the kitchen contains a variety of cupboards, drawers and pantry spaces. One set of drawers operates in both directions between the kitchen and adjacent dining room. These drawers sit within a carefully designed storage unit of timber and glass that faces into the dining room.\(^\text{75}\)

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Whether Ms Mottram possessed greater insight than her male colleagues into the design and fitting-out of flats could be debated, but in the interwar period there prevailed an attitude that women, whose traditional sphere was the home and family, had much to contribute to the design and equipping of domestic accommodation. Late in 1922, for example, the local *Sunday Mail* ran an article drawn from the London *Daily Chronicle*, encouraging women to take up architecture – especially when ‘The course of study involved before the women student can become a full-fledged architect is very interesting, and does not require exceptional brilliancy’. This call appears to have been formulated on the assumption that female architects would naturally wish to ‘better the homes of the poorer classes’ and design homes convenient for the housewife:

There is a great need for flats and bungalows with wardrobes, washstands, book shelves, sideboards, and china cupboard, etc, as permanent fittings in the walls. In an up-to-date residence, these should form part of the interior of the rooms, and be so sunk in nooks in the well-panelled walls that every available inch of space is adapted to good use.\(^76\)

The female perspective in the fitting-out of compact homes was encouraged in the local press. Flats compressed living and attracted all sorts of ingenious ideas from women for making them functional and attractive. Some of these contributions revealed more about living conditions in the average house, than about modern flats, which tended to be glamorised and promoted as an escape from the drudgery of maintaining the non-efficient, poorly-equipped houses of this era.\(^77\)

In one matter designers of flat buildings were in almost universal agreement: the need to provide built-in cabinetry in the kitchens\(^78\) and bathrooms. These were the two fundamental service areas in a flat and usually also the smallest rooms; designing large bathrooms and kitchens for occupants to furnish as they pleased would take up valuable living and bedroom space, and in all likelihood destroy the concept of

\(^76\) ‘Women Architects To Help Housewives’ in *Sunday Mail*, 17 December 1922, p23.


\(^78\) The compact kitchen was a trend in all forms of modern housing, as was highlighted in the local press in 1925: ‘With the tabloid methods of living that are fast coming upon us, and which we cannot fail to recognise, the modern housewife welcomes any compactness of the home (which must not be confused with congestion) and the kitchen that provides her sufficient area to cook and tuck everything away without taking unnecessary footsteps, and the minimum amount of circulation that will mean less tripping in and out of a kitchen to a dining-room situated in different or more remote parts of the house, will be welcome.’ (‘Club Flatlets For Business Women. A Home From Home’ in *Sunday Mail*, 24 May 1925, p14, derived from a Sydney publication, *Construction*, but originally from a British newspaper.)
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economy of scale employed in modern flat developments. Furthermore, fully-equipped and built-in kitchens and bathrooms were key attractions of compact living – for both tenants and owners. As reported in a press review of new flat developments in Brisbane during 1939:

Space usually is at a premium, and as much accommodation is packed into each flat as possible. Built-in cupboards and furniture are features in many cases, because of their compactness. Special attention also is paid to bathroom and kitchen appointments. They have to stand up to constant use by changing hands, and are made substantially and attractively. Tiled walls and floors, and terrazzo are often found in bathrooms. In others, modern wall boards finished in bright enamels are used.79

The fitting-out of kitchens in flat buildings was approached quite ‘scientifically’. All the better-class flats provided a refrigerator and cooking appliances (usually a gas cooker and hob), which were ducted respectively to a central refrigeration plant and gas supply in the basement or ground floor of the building. Similarly, the hot and cold water supply was usually centrally located and controlled. Kitchen cupboards and the sink were then designed around these fixtures. The degree of thought and planning invested in a kitchen fit-out could be an attractive marketing tool in new flat developments. Consider the following description of the design of the kitchens in Coronet Flats (1933) in New Farm:

One of the most interesting features of each of the flats is the kitchen, upon which the designer has expended much time and thought in working out a scheme to reduce labour to the minimum. The sequence of services is sink, gas stove (elevated on a combination table and cupboard); a length of bench-table, fitted with cupboards; and finally electric refrigerator. All these conveniences are flush against the wall, and a skirting beneath the cupboards is fixed in a straight line so that there are no corners where dust and dirt may collect.80

Similarly, bathrooms attracted much promotional comment, with designers vying to incorporate the latest in ‘roman baths’, tiled walls, terrazzo floors, and built-in medicine cabinets. The bathrooms in most interwar purpose-designed flats, even the very best of these, tended to be extremely small, but as compensation, they were fitted with the latest in materials, fixtures and features. In the well-appointed Juniper Flats (1937) at

79 Courier-Mail, 12 March 1940, p16.
80 Courier-Mail, 17 November 1933, p5.
Kangaroo Point, for example, ‘All plumbing fixtures are in enamel and chromium, including built-in shaving cabinets, towel rails, and such equipment.’

One piece of built-in furniture used extensively in Sydney and in some Melbourne flats, especially in the large blocks of one-bedroom and bachelor flats, but which did not prove popular in Brisbane, was the American wall-bed. Advertisements for ‘Oscillating Portal Wall-Beds’, the merits of which lay ‘in less expense for furnishing, and much less housework, practically eliminating the servant problem’, were featured regularly in journals such as Building, but little evidence of their use in Brisbane’s purpose-built flats has been identified in this study, possibly reflecting the lack of purpose-designed bachelor flats in Brisbane.

On the other hand, a popular built-in feature in Brisbane’s modern flats from the early 1920s was the dining alcove, illustrated in Figure 7.15 at right:

The dining alcove off the kitchen is fast finding favour for the simple meal prepared by the frugal wife; no man nowadays wishes to dine ‘in state’ if such means the sacrifice of his wife’s energies (servants being out of the question) to uninteresting and mentally and physically unremitting duties.

Local architects considered there was ‘letting value’ in this feature, which was attractive to tenants, and eliminated the need to provide a separate dining room:

In making the utmost of valuable area, upon which the success of small flats almost entire depends, considerable ingenuity is often exercised – and many things may have to be sacrificed. First of all, one must make up one’s mind to do without rooms which are not absolutely necessary, and the first to go is likely to be the dining room, used for but one definite, specific purpose – that of eating of meals.

81 Sunday Mail, 20 June 1937, p25.
82 See for example Building, 12 February 1920, p135.
83 Building, 11 January 1919, p24.
84 Sunday Mail, 24 May 1925, p14.
85 ABJO, 10 October 1935, p12; Courier-Mail, 26 July 1938, p17; Telegraph, 8 October 1935, p15.

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To take the place of the dining room use is now often made of what are known as ‘dining alcoves’, tiny oblong spaces, literally alcoves or glorified closets, which are often fitted with benches set against the walls with long narrow tables between. In the living room of an exceedingly small apartment such a dining alcove should be arranged close to the kitchenette.\(^8^6\)

Dining alcoves were used extensively in Brisbane flats developments, including many of the best-appointed. Blairmore Flats (1938) in New Farm is one example.\(^8^7\)

**Fig. 7.16** Interior of Blairmore Flats, New Farm, 1938. Dining alcove on left. (Sunday Mail, 15 May 1938, p16.)

**Multi-function furniture and the influence of ‘Art Moderne’**

The large, old-fashioned sideboards, bookcases, wardrobes and kitchen dressers of the pre-war years could not fit comfortably into the confines of the average modern interwar flat. Whether marketed to the working girl, the bachelor, the childless couple, the young married couple with one or two small children, the middle-class widow, or the successful businessman, flats of this era were modest in scale.

To accommodate this new form of residential accommodation, from the 1920s Australian furniture became smaller, utilitarian and often multi-functional. Where folding furniture (such as additional tables and stools) had in the past assisted one room to serve the function of two, modern inventiveness was replacing this with ‘two-in-one’ or combination furniture:

‘Double purpose’ furnishing, such as dressing table stools that are also soiled linen boxes, and pouffes that are fitted as hat boxes loom important among the many practical inventions designed to make life in a small flat at once more convenient and pleasant.\(^8^8\)

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87 ‘Plan of Proposed Residential Apartments Vulture Street South Brisbane for RJA Smith Esq.’, Trewern Collection, Job no. 1037 (UQFL239); *Sunday Mail*, 15 May 1938, p16.

88 ‘Furniture Problems. To Fit The Flat’ in *Sunday Mail*, 19 September 1926, p14. See also ‘Varied Uses Modern Furniture’ in *Sunday Mail*, 16 December 1928, p11 for a lengthy list of ‘modern items which perform many roles’ – which
Combination furniture was not restricted to small items such as those described above. A popular new item which appeared in Sydney in the mid-to-late 1920s was the combination day-time couch and night-time bed, including one design ‘which combines the facilities of a loughboy [sic], wardrobe, pedestal, dressing table, and sideboard all in one piece’.89 The couch-bed was considered perfect for the ‘bed-sit’ or for use in the living room in small flats where there was no additional bedroom in which to accommodate a guest.90

Contemporary observers linked the fashion for these new forms of furniture to the rise of the modern flat. As was stated in a *Sunday Mail* article in 1930: ‘Makers of attractive furniture seem to have adapted themselves recently to the demands of the small flat’.91 Again, in an article in the Brisbane *Telegraph* in 1935, promoting dual-purpose rooms and dual-purpose furniture in small houses and flats, the writer argued that:

... it was with the growing popularity of the 'flat' that definite steps were taken to plan furniture that performed one duty by day and another by night.

To-day it is possible to furnish a bed-sitting room so that by day there is no indication of its night-time use, and yet a few moments are sufficient to change it into a comfortable bedroom.92

By the mid-1930s, many combination and dual-function items of furniture were available in Australian cities, including combination dressing table and dining table or dressing table and desk. However, the down-sizing did not stop with furniture. Utensils and crockery became simpler with the introduction in the 1920s of ‘combination tea-breakfast-and-dinner-sets that enable the requisite number of pieces for the different meals to be very considerably reduced and at the same time solve the troublesome question of cupboard accommodation’.93

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89 *Building*, 12 May 1930, p 119.
90 This concept was sustained through the interwar period, and by 1940 the ‘couch’ or ‘settee’ had become a ‘divan’: ‘Modern ideas of furnishing and the compactness of modern home planning have brought into prominence the divan. ... It is sometimes called a day bed, and as such provides extra accommodation in compact modern flats and small homes. By day it serves as a couch and comfortable seating accommodation; by night it can be used for emergency bedding if an overnight visitor arrives unexpectedly.’ (*Sunday Mail*, 12 May 1940, p25.)
91 ‘Adaptable Pieces For Flat-Dwellers’ in *Sunday Mail*, 31 August 1930, p20.
93 *Sunday Mail*, 19 September 1926, p14.
Interwar newspapers and lifestyle magazines were filled with ideas for furnishing and decorating the small, modern flat – whether a tiny bed-sit or the glamorous apartments of the affluent – with decorators advising on how ‘to create an effect of space’. Consider, for example, the following description of a ‘modern bed-sitting room’ (illustrated at right), furnished and decorated in the fabrics and colours fashionable in 1927:

This charming apartment, designed by Jack Dare, is intended for a modern business girl, who takes most of her meals out. … The couch-bed, the chief piece of furniture in all bed-sitting room schemes, is attractive. Underneath is a flat box wardrobe on castors. This takes the bedclothes. The writing desk is a happy idea, for while serving its original purpose, it also does dressing-table duty. … The wallpaper is cream flecked with pale pistachio green. The woodwork is enameled deep cream, and the ceiling is ivory. Deep green cork lino covers the floor, and there is a large circular rug of string colour and leaf brown. The curtains are of natural Shantung silk, lined with pale green, the pelmet being decorated with darker green. Ivory net hangs in soft folds next to the window panes. Rep, in a soft mulberry colour, is used for the chair covers, and the cushions are in blues and blacks. Coloured woodcuts framed in narrow black mouldings hang on the walls, and there is a vase of spring flowers on the low table.

In the above illustration the described colour scheme and finishes were extremely modern, designed to create a greater sense of light and space than the dark timber-panelled interiors of the average Brisbane house of this period, but the ‘low table’ was the only truly modern item of furniture in the room. Within a few years, however, Australia was swept by radical new concepts in furniture design, which adapted perfectly to the furnishing of modern flats.

94 For example, by limiting the number of objects in a room; using plain wallpapers or paint finishes rather than figured; keeping carpets neutral or if figured, small; hanging pictures in groups; and avoiding fussy curtains (Telegraph, 2 May 1933, p6).
95 ‘The Modern Bed-Sitting Room’ in Sunday Mail, 22 May 1927, p22.
The catalyst for the introduction of streamlined Art Moderne design in Australia was the Burdekin House Exhibition in Sydney, open to the public from 9 October until 21 December 1929. The aim of this furniture exhibition was ‘to gather a loan collection of the finest examples of old furniture in the State – to display and arrange the pieces in the various rooms of the old house’. In addition, the top storey was ‘devoted to displays of modern furniture’ and interior decoration by a number of invited ‘experts’, who in effect were putting before the public ‘The Case for Modernity’ in Australian interiors. The furniture was designed and manufactured in Sydney, and reputedly, showcased how the European ‘L’art Moderne’ could be interpreted ‘in a practical sense ... applicable to Australian conditions and temperament.’

The Australian public gradually, and somewhat cautiously, embraced modern, functional, streamlined design and materials, although rarely with the same intellectual approach as that of the designer:

Everything tends towards simplification and massing. Colour is being used in masses principally. Furniture is being designed in simple and easily-cleaned styles, steel being used extensively in its construction.

Now that we have embarked upon a period where everything is change, where it is the new that is appreciated, we have a task presented before us. Art is becoming increasingly intellectual ... we are ruling out the purely sensuous. It is now our aim where decoration is concerned to express ourselves intellectually with forms and line. ... There is a true quality behind the successful decorative scheme which is rhythmic and in no way meaningless.

In the 1930s, what had commenced as an intellectual concept was absorbed into the public consciousness through the practicalities of modern living. The average Australian had the opportunity to benefit from new materials and designs, without the intellectual strain of understanding why they had come about. As the unacknowledged author of a mid-1936 Courier-Mail article suggested:

97 Home 1 October 1929, p21.
98 Leighton F. Irwin, ‘The Trend of Design as shown by Modern Architecture’ in Building, 12 June 1930, p86.
Modernism in architecture and furnishing is an effort to express the spirit and accomplishments of these times without too much regard for the past. ... Modern innovations have transformed the problem of life within the house. In place of the old cabinets and cupboards, heavy chairs and tables and all the ponderous furniture pieces that formerly oppressed, moderns use chairs that are light and mobile, simple, and hygienic; built-in cupboards and wardrobes; furniture that is strong, simple, light, mass-produced, and of machine-dictated design. Moderns demand a greater service from the things about them: house fittings and furniture must serve a real purpose, without involving constant attention and work.100

Streamlined, easy-care new furniture for the small, modern flat was the ideal solution, as illustrated in the example in Figure 7.18 where the architect of new flats constructed at Bellevue Hill, Sydney, in 1935, also designed their streamlined, lacquered furniture.101

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Brisbane flats were furnished in the modern style. Very few of the better-quality purpose-built blocks of flats – including those designed in streamlined or functional styles – were let furnished, and no specific example has been identified of flats in which the architect also designed other than built-in furniture. Known furnished flats tended toward the _ad hoc_, ‘homely’ approach of more traditional furniture, especially the reproduction antiques and ‘chesterfields’ which filled the Brisbane department stores (refer to Fig. 7.19 below as illustration).

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100 ‘Modern Homes For Modern People’ in _Courier-Mail_, 26 May 1936, p23.
101 _Building_, 12 October 1935, p32.
To furnish or not to furnish?

Whether new flats were let furnished or unfurnished depended on the nature and purpose of the development. Furnished flats tended to attract less-permanent tenants. If the owner of a flat building wished to attract long-term tenants, especially in the more prestigious purpose-built blocks, the flats would not be rented fully-furnished unless sub-let. Some of the better-quality flats offered a mix of furnished and unfurnished flats, especially if there was a range of flat sizes. However, based on the advertisements which appeared in the daily ‘to let’ columns in the local press, the greater number of interwar furnished flats seemingly were found in the house conversions, which in general offered lower rents and tended to attract shorter term or less affluent tenants requiring furnished accommodation.

The standard of the furnishings in house conversions varied widely. Some landlords no doubt prided themselves on the appointments and furnishings, but that this was not always the case is illustrated in the following extract from an article on the frustrations of a husband and wife’s search for a furnished flat in Brisbane in 1923:

She [the landlady] opened with a flourish the door of a little balcony room about eight feet square, the contents of which were chiefly [the] bed. An extremely small chest of drawers was packed tightly into a corner ... and there was a chair of dissipated and uninviting appearance. Opening off this palatial chamber was a place she supposed to be [the] wardrobe, but, a trifle resentfully, the landlady informed us that it was the other room.102

As investments, purpose-designed, fully-furnished flats became more popular in Brisbane in the late 1930s, although nothing like the scale of a similar trend in Sydney earlier in the decade:

Formerly, the flat which was let furnished was either a rare and expensive luxury, or else a concession to travellers and others whose stay would be but brief. In the nineteen-thirties prices have come down. The average person living near the city is prepared to move into a furnished flat for a longer period, or even to stay in one permanently. Not everyone wants to be bothered with goods and chattels of his own. There are people who prize freedom from responsibility, and the idea that they can easily move to a new place if they want to ... In order to cater for these people, more and more owners of the huge blocks of flats which are appearing in such profusion are furnishing the rooms.103

Bow Hill Flats (1941) at the corner of Leichhardt and Fortescue streets in Spring Hill, for example, was a two-storeyed brick block of six furnished, one-bedroom flats within easy walking distance of the city centre. They were well-finished and furnished in contemporary colours and designs, but not in the Art Moderne style; the emphasis was on creating a ‘home like’ quality (refer to Figure 7.19 below):

Each flat includes a commodious lounge, a large bedroom, sun-room, kitchen and bathroom. In the lounge each is provided with a chesterfield suite upholstered in cowhide in tonings of cream and green, cream and wine or cream and russet. The principal bedroom has silky oak furnishings ... The bathrooms have tiled dado surrounding the bath, terrazzo floor, and septic convenience.104

104 *Telegraph*, 28 June 1941, p16.
Chapter 7: Designing, finishing and furnishing flats

Conclusion

The interwar flat buildings of Brisbane form a distinctive and cohesive group in the cityscape, attributable to similarities of scale, materials, design and a range of recognisable architectural forms and popular interwar styles in the exterior detailing. As a type, they are a product of the influence of official regulation, investor finance and aspiration, and designer skills and activism.

In the interwar period key non-government stakeholders in the development of Brisbane flats – financiers, developers, real estate agents, architects, engineers and town planners – sought to influence the nature and extent of the ‘flat fashion’. When financiers, for example, believed that the accommodation market was oversupplied with purpose-built flats in the late 1930s, they restricted and finally curtailed funding for larger-scale flat projects (refer to Chapter 5). In the 1930s town planners and social reformers lobbied the Brisbane City Council for tighter controls over the construction and licensing of flats, and when these were introduced, developers and real estate agents campaigned for greater leeway in the interpretation of the new ordinances (refer to Chapter 4). But it was the professionals – primarily architects, engineers and town planners – who exerted the most constructive of these non-regulatory influences on flat developments, through their promotion of design parameters for successful flats.

Reports in the local press and trade journals during the interwar years reveal that the architectural profession embraced the purpose-built flat wholeheartedly, promoting its advantages to developers while simultaneously endeavouring to raise public awareness and interest in good-quality flat developments. In addition to the preparation of individual designs, architects influenced more broadly the nature, planning and style of flat buildings, especially the purpose-built blocks. Their attempts to encourage more appropriate house conversions were not necessarily as successful.

The designers of Brisbane flat buildings took advantage of the latest in modern materials to produce robust, and in the main aesthetically-pleasing, buildings, which would be both attractive to tenants and withstand constant tenancy change. The early finishes and fixtures surviving in these buildings present a valuable cross-section of the modern materials and products available to designers and builders in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.
World-wide, the compact nature of the modern flat generated new ideas about internal planning, finishes, furniture and decoration, to which the designers of Brisbane’s early flats were fully attuned. In planning small flats, non-essential corridors were eliminated, bathrooms and water closets were combined in one room, open-plan between kitchen, dining room and lounge was encouraged with dining alcoves taking the place of formal dining rooms and kitchens being reduced in many cases to ‘kitchenettes’, and multi-function semi-enclosed verandahs provided as an ‘escape’ from the confines of the flat. Efficiency of materials and finishes was emphasised. Wall-tiling, terrazzo flooring, polished timber floor boards, and enamel paint on walls, skirting boards and architraves, were all intended to make cleaning easy, reduce housework, and eliminate damage to the fabric, thereby creating self-sustaining buildings which would prove advantageous investments to owners.

In the interwar period Australian furniture became smaller in size, of greater utility and more frequently included as part of the construction of the modern home. In Brisbane, the provision of built-in cabinetry in the new blocks of flats became not only standard, but inventive, and a principal attraction for flat-dwellers.

The place of the flat in modern residential design may be argued to have reached its apotheosis in July 1938, when the Courier-Mail promoted a design prepared by architect Edward Weller for a new cottage ‘with the features of a flat’. Flats were now influencing house design. All that architects had striven for in terms of compactness, convenience, built-in facilities and ease of maintenance and cleaning in good flat developments, was being transposed to the small suburban house:

- Domestic architecture of the current period will relate to future generations the history of a people who, faced with a new set of economic and social conditions, suddenly found it necessary to conserve its resources.

- Builders of flats have made such a scientific study of the problem, and have so succeeded in associating comfort with restricted house space, that modern housewives are convinced that a small house is easier to keep in order than a large one. ...

- Inevitably the modelling of single-unit homes on the lines of up-to-date flats has come about.\(^{105}\)

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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 236
Tabloid living
Brisbane’s interwar foray into the compact world of flat-living was linked closely to contemporary notions of what it meant to be modern. Flats, especially the new purpose-built blocks, epitomised modernity, and flat-living became both a consequence and a symbol of the social, cultural and technological changes embodied in the expression ‘being modern’.

If the flat lifestyle was to be widely accepted in the community, more was required of promoters than simply enumerating the advantages of the compact flat. In an era in which the promotion of suburban living dominated lifestyle magazines both nationally and locally, and the proliferation of houses being converted into make-shift ‘flats’ and tenements prompted community rejection of compact living, the difficulty of attracting investors and tenants to the more expensive (and more socially acceptable) flat developments proved a challenge to designers, developers, real estate agents and advertisers alike. The solution they chose was a natural outcome of the age: pre-conditioning for the acceptance of flats in Australia, lay in the association of flat-living with notions of modernity, of ‘being modern’ and concomitantly, with a sense of cosmopolitanism and glamour.

In the interwar print media the terms modern, modernity and modernism were employed liberally in connection with flats and flat-dwelling, writers assuming that these words were intrinsic to twentieth-century western vocabulary and that every sector of society clearly understood what they intended or implied. But what did contemporary social commentators mean by ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’? Was it simply a matter of keeping pace with the new technologies and fashions, or was there something more fundamental, some shift in social and cultural attitudes, connoted in these words?

As Martin Pumphrey argues, the positioning of women is central to early-twentieth-century and interwar modernity:

Any adequate reading of the modern period ... must take account of the fact that the debates over women’s public freedom, over fashion and femininity, cosmetics and home cleaning were as essential to the fabrication of modernity as cubism, Dada or futurism, as symbolism, fragmented form or the stream-of-consciousness narrative.¹

¹ Pumphrey, p181.
The confluence of modernity, consumer culture and women’s emancipation deeply affected socio-cultural attitudes to flat-dwelling in Brisbane during the interwar years. As a product of Western capitalist industrialism and philosophically grounded in the legitimacy of self-fulfilment, consumerism was fundamental to the newly-spun fabric of twentieth-century life, and its association with the marketing of ‘image’ became symptomatic of modernity. With the early-twentieth-century positioning of women as society’s principal consumers,² the role of women as harbingers of the modern was consolidated.

It is no coincidence therefore that the promoted convenience and glamour of living in a new, well-appointed, modern flat in Brisbane in the interwar years was targeted primarily at women. The purpose-designed interwar Brisbane flat was presented not just as available accommodation, but as a desirable consumer item. Marketing strategies for interwar flats borrowed heavily from the retail sector, targeting women as occupants (both as householders and wives of householders) and emphasising the ‘modern-ness’ of new flats, their appointments, and the lifestyle they engendered.

In this chapter, the ideal and the reality of living in Brisbane flats in the interwar period are explored, largely through a reading of contemporary Brisbane and Sydney print media. The section sub-titled ‘Crowded living or cosy urban retreat?’ also draws from 1933 Australian census data relating to the number of occupants of Brisbane interwar flats and tenements.

² Much recent academic discourse has explored the interrelationship between early-twentieth-century consumerism, modernity and the role of women. Rita Felski, for example, in her ground-breaking work in interpreting modernity from the perspective of female consumption, argues that ‘consumption situated femininity at the heart of the modern in a way that the discourses of production and rationalization ... did not.’ (Felski, p61.)
Modern living or ‘the invention of the devil’?

Flats and the new mode of living they engendered were subject to intense community scrutiny throughout the interwar years, expressed principally as a lively discourse in the print media of the day on the pros and cons of the flat lifestyle. Debate was earliest and loudest in Sydney, the first Australian metropolitan area to embrace the construction of purpose-built blocks of flats on a substantial scale,3 and was monitored closely in other Australian metropolitan areas which were experiencing similar housing shortages, rapidly increasing urban populations, and inner-city congestion.

The rapidity with which Sydney’s inhabitants adopted the new form of multiple-occupancy dwelling was extraordinary. By 1920 the city’s inner suburbs appeared to have been transformed into a ‘flat-land’ – a term in use by late 1920 to describe a form of residence and mode of living introduced to Sydney during the 1910s. Few of the city’s residents had experienced flat-living prior to the Great War of 1914-1918, and those who had spent the better part of the war overseas could scarcely believe the change to the inner city on their return.4

Attitudes to flat-living generated strongly demarcated positions. Progressive popular thinking promoted living in flats as a phenomenon of the modern age – a reflection of social maturity, female emancipation, rapidly increasing urban populations and rising inner-city land values. Conservatives vilified the flat lifestyle as antithetical to family life and national well-being, depicting flats as ‘the invention of the devil’5 and the slums of the future. Pragmatists drew from both sides of the debate: the detached suburban house was the preferred form of residence in which to raise Australian families, but there was a niche for the well-designed, purpose-built flat in the modern city.6

3 Richard Cardew, in his analysis of census data and local government records relating to the pattern of flat construction in Sydney to the 1940s, provides empirical evidence to illustrate that from the 1910s, flats were being built in substantial numbers in inner Sydney, and that the trend toward the suburbanisation of flats was well under way in the second half of the 1920s (Cardew, 1980, p72). See also Cardew, 1970.
5 Evidence given before at the Commonwealth Basic Wage Royal Commission on living conditions in Sydney early in 1920, cited in Building, 12 April 1920, p58.
6 See for example an article (unacknowledged, but probably written by Florence Taylor) titled ‘Flats their development and advantages’ pp60-62 in Building, 11 December 1920.
In the early 1920s many Australians were still uncomfortable with the concept of flat-living. Of concern was the compact nature of flats, which initially was a major deterrent to the acceptance of flat-living. The concept of living being ‘compressed’ into a few rooms was the reason d’être for flats, but for occupants this produced both advantages and disadvantages. Those accustomed to residing in a detached suburban house and garden – especially the middle classes used to more than a two- or three-roomed cottage – could find the confines of the modern flat alien and oppressive, as eloquently expressed in this quote from a 1920 article on Sydney flats:

... Strange how much worse things seem to be when they happen in flats. ... And the reason? A tragedy is compressed in a flat, the ceiling weighs it down, the walls press it in; there is no upstairs or kitchen garden for the overflow, and it therefore explodes with greater violence on the public mind.\(^7\)

Taken to extremes, flat-living could be concentrated into a single room. In the United States the term ‘tabloid home’ was introduced in the early 1920s to describe the latest trend in small flats – the ‘three-in-one’ room which, with the assistance of folding furniture, oscillating wall beds and built-in cabinets and alcoves, could serve as living room, dining room and bedroom.\(^8\) While single-roomed accommodation in Brisbane was probably a tenement rather than a flat, the concept received considerable publicity and currency. Terminology such as ‘compact living’ or ‘tabloid living’ in reference to flats and the flat lifestyle remained popular in Australia throughout the interwar years – perhaps more so in the 1920s as the population was adjusting to this new form of residential accommodation.

Then there were the moral issues of unmarried men and women living (unchaperoned) in unavoidably close proximity, and a strong perception that dwelling in flats posed a threat to family life and the development of the nation. When Florence Taylor began in

\(^7\) The Home, 1 December 1920, p85.

\(^8\) Tabloid Homes. “Three in One” Flats’ in Sunday Mail, 27 May 1923, p12.

The word ‘tabloid’ has an interesting and comparatively recent origin.


**Tabloid:** 1884, “small tablet of medicine,” trademark name (by Burroughs, Wellcome and Co.) for compressed or concentrated chemicals and drugs, formed from tablet + Greek-derived suffix -oid. By 1898, it was being used figuratively to mean a compressed form or dose of anything, hence tabloid journalism (1901), and newspapers that typified it (1918), so called for having short, condensed news articles and/or for being small in size.

Hence the popular application to flats small in size, in which living was ‘compressed’.
1920 to promote the construction of well-designed, purpose-built flats in Australian cities, she acknowledged a strong community antipathy to the flat lifestyle:

In Australia, much exception has been taken to the ‘flat system of living’, as it is said to be conducive to lower[ing] the moral tone of the occupants, by affording the means of too much familiarity and not enough privacy between tenants. It is also said to reduce the birth rate, as it has always been maintained that children are unwelcome guests in flats, because they annoy the neighbours above, below and on every side, with their childish noises.\(^9\)

Taylor was by no means alone in identifying community concern that flat-living undermined the traditional family unit, the core of Australian society. Consider, for example, this 1923 \textit{Sunday Mail} comment on the new fashion for living in flats:

Flats supply a want created through the changed living conditions, and solve the problem of housing families in congested city or suburban areas. Their special appeal, however, is to the drifting populace, rather than to those people who aim at settling down in permanent homes to the responsibilities of rearing families and becoming good citizens.\(^{10}\)

As the 1920s advanced, Brisbane’s experience of flats and ‘the modern method of living’ they engendered broadened, but the perception that flats served only as temporary accommodation for a transient community, rather than as homes for permanent residents, persisted. In the mid-1920s the idea of a flat being a home was widely perceived as futuristic, as illustrated in comments such as the following:

... Brisbane will have with each succeeding year an addition to the class of people who find, through various private reasons, that the flat is better suited to their requirements, and, as the demand grows, so will the energies of the investor find its scope for development. It will be years, if at all, before anything like a general change in the life of its people will come. This is the opinion of those best capable of judging the position.\(^{11}\)

and

Brisbane has had its flats for years ... generally they provide more for a floating community than a ‘fixed place of residence’. ... Brisbane has yet to adapt its tastes to the truly broad principles of flat life. ... It may be accepted, however, that with modernism creeping – in some instances bounding – into community life, tastes are liable to change. It will be no surprise if in a few years the flat is recognised as a homely proposition.\(^{12}\)

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Living in flats focussed attention on modern trends such as reduced family sizes, smaller homes, higher living standards, and cultural acceptance that women could, and did, play a role in the workplace outside the home. In consequence, the discourse on flat-living was subsumed within broader community concerns about the decreasing size of families and the roles of women in marriage and in the workplace.

Historians have labelled the interwar period as a ‘heyday’ in community discourse on the role of women in society, their rights within marriage, and on sex and sexuality generally. The debate involved all sectors of society, and became particularly heated in the 1930s when, during a period of economic recession, women were seen to be usurping men’s jobs. Writing to the *Courier-Mail* in 1936, for example, one ‘Modern Girl’ expressed her irritation with conservative reaction to the independent, recreational-driven lifestyle that many young women were leading:

Sir. - Every now and then some leader of the Church launches an invective against the waywardness of the modern girl. Mostly such criticism is merely amusing, and can be good-naturedly tolerated; but now that such views are beginning to insinuate themselves into public opinion, it is time a long-overdue rebuke was administered. It seems necessary to remind our loudly lamenting critics that this is 1936, the most advanced year of an era remarkable for its freedom, intellectual, political, and social. And freedom is not necessarily licence. Monotonous repetition is striving to convince us that if a girl smokes a cigarette, drinks a cocktail, gets an added thrill out of dancing because the lights are low, or buries her weekly worries in the hilarity of a beautiful Sunday at the seaside, she is well on the road to moral degradation and social ignominy.

The suggestion is ludicrous and shows only that the persons responsible for it know nothing of what they speak. They are not in a position to have that knowledge. Their outlook is imprisoned in a narrow groove of misguided righteousness; and usually the critics are men well past that hilarious, carefree springtime of life – their youth. Men so heavily prejudiced have no right to interfere with the disposition of the girl of to-day.

I am, sir, etc. Brisbane. ‘MODERN GIRL’.

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14 *Courier-Mail*, 3 November 1936, p20.
Chapter 8: Tabloid living

Modern living or ‘the invention of the devil’?

One of the great moral and social debates of the interwar period, and one with direct implications for flat-living, centred on birth control, which was becoming more widely practised as workplace and career opportunities for women expanded.\(^{15}\) While some sectors of the community perceived planned families to be a direct threat to national well-being, the modern shift toward equality of women and men in marriage and the desire to provide a better life for fewer children was proving irresistible and irreversible.

Voices in support of family planning argued that marriage simply was taking a new direction, one appropriate to a modern age. In this vision of the new home life, there appears to have been a strong correlation between modern marriage and the shift to living in flats. Consider, for example, the following extract from a 1929 article on the future of marriage, published in *The Home*:

> Will the present day tendencies towards fewer and fewer children, smaller and smaller houses, and more and more business career instead of domestic duties for wives, continue? ... The point is, of course, that we could not go back if we would. ... Home life has collapsed. But I do not believe that, therefore, marriage is on the rocks. ... Young husbands no longer possess lawns and lawn mowers, but flivvers and the open road seem to enable them to bear up. Young women are no longer good housekeepers, but they are pretty good golf partners. Business wives cannot meet their husband on the doorstep with their slippers, but after dinner, when both sink into chairs, asking nothing better after a hard day in the office than a book and a companionable silence, I do not know that they are much unhappier than the pairs, where only the husband is tired and the home-keeping wife, after a lonely day, is naturally bubbling over with a desire for talk or to go to a party.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) At the Anglican Communion’s Lambeth Conference of 1930, a resolution approving the use of artificial contraception in marriage in limited circumstances (for economic and moral reasons) – which had been rejected outright at the previous conference in 1920 – confirmed the depth of the shifts in social and cultural values that were taking place under the guise of modernity. On his return to Australia from the 1930 conference, Archbishop Head of Melbourne attempted to explain to the public the reasons for the revised resolution: ‘The old views of morality are being questioned as never before since the Renaissance. ... Women are demanding a morality in which their rights in marriage shall be given something more like an equality with those of men. A wife now claims to be her husband’s comrade rather than his possession. ... If a man and wife had realised that the physical side of love is only the expression of a spiritual relationship it is better to leave them free to use modern medical knowledge as in the sight of God than to condemn what may, perhaps, lead to disease or moral disaster, or even death.’ *(Brisbane Courier, 11 November 1930, p13).* [Lambeth Conferences are assemblies of the Anglican Communion (an international association of Anglican churches) convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury approximately every ten years, attended by Anglican Bishops who are heads of national churches, with the objective of consolidating and enunciating Anglican attitudes to fundamental social and moral issues of the day (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lambeth_Conference, viewed 10 April 2009).]

Chapter 8: Tabloid living
Modern living or ‘the invention of the devil’?

Leaving aside the male author’s assumption that house-keeping and child-rearing were not as (or more) arduous and tiring for women as the office was for men, the above comments illuminate much contemporary thinking about the new roles of women in the workplace and the effects of this on modern marriage and modern lifestyles. Although no overt reference to flat-living is made, the inference is that modern young career couples were childless and were not suburban house-and-garden dwellers. They spent their weekends at recreational activities away from the home, and were in equal pursuit of the economic good-life. A lifestyle such as this was facilitated by flat-living, which freed occupants from week-end house and garden maintenance, and in many cases, from the responsibilities of child-rearing. By inference, the occupants of modern flats were middle-class couples who enjoyed a social life at the expense of family life.

While this concept worried some sectors of Brisbane society, the flat lifestyle was developing a resonance with a growing proportion of the population. By the early 1930s living in flats in Brisbane had become an acceptable cultural practice. The number of occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area increased by 348 per cent between 1921 and 1933 (from 1,087 to 3,785) and by 1933 approximately 10,500 persons, or 3.52 per cent of the metropolitan population, resided in flats.17

It was still evident from contemporary commentary, however, that flats were considered an aberration in the great suburban dreaming. Flat-dwellers who considered their flat to be their permanent ‘home’ were believed to be in the minority. The following 1933 media comment illustrates this attitude:

Flat life has come and come to stay, but it will never be much more than a means of providing temporary homes for a floating population. At no time in the history of the world has more attention been paid to the designing and building of homes which are best adapted to various social and family needs of man, and it is only in catering for the needs of a minor section, apart from those who desire a dwelling place pro-tem that flats have a definite place in the realm of Home-Making.18

Again, a contributor (‘R.P.D.’) to the Brisbane Telegraph in 1934, writing in support of flat-living, acknowledged strong residual community concern that flats were destroying family life:

Many contend that it is the advent of the flat that is responsible for the drastic changes which have taken place in social life during the past twenty-five years, and advance the theory that if only the building of flats were restricted to a limit sufficient to cater for a city’s floating population, then more traditional domestic establishments would result with a consequent return of larger families, civic pride and other desirable responsibilities.  

Those in defence of flats also argued that flat-dwellers, not the type of dwelling they chose, should be held responsible for social change:

Of late, many changes have been laid at the door of the modern flat ... Some accuse it of reducing the birth-rate, and see in it the creator of that ‘fluidity’ prevalent in city life. They forget that the growth of the flat, however, followed certain outlooks and requirements, which were not the erection of the flats. Many childless couples do occupy flats, but they are in flats because they are childless, not childless because they are in flats. The fault lies in the people, not the flats.

Emerging from contemporary writing was a community perception of the ‘otherness’ of flat-dwellers, who, in eschewing the suburban house and garden, were seen to be embracing an alternative lifestyle. As flat-occupancy boomed in Brisbane during the second half of the 1930s, local commentators began to write about flat-dwellers as a distinctive social group, ‘a section of the community radically different in their viewpoint of domestic life from any other section in Brisbane.’

Contemporary architects, builders and real estate agents promoted the new lifestyle, drawing attention to the tendency for reduced family sizes as justification for Brisbane residents to consider living in flats. Claims that flats appealed principally to the childless young couple, ‘more concerned in the social whirl than in the upbringing of a family’ and to widows and older married couples whose children had left home, were common. The author of a report in the ‘Building and Real Estate’ columns of the Courier-Mail in September 1933, for example, suggested:

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20 ‘The Significance of Flats. Their Place in the Community’ republished from the July 1937 issue of Constructional Review in Courier-Mail, 10 August 1937, p.18. The former was an allied publication of Building, and the author of this article was probably Florence Taylor, the principal voice behind both these Sydney publications, who had long promoted the construction of well-designed flats in Australia.

21 ‘New Farm Fast Becoming a Region of Flats’ in Courier-Mail, 25 March 1936, p.20.

22 ‘Boom’ In Modern Flats. House SHORTAGE In Brisbane’ in Courier-Mail, 10 August 1934, p.21.
... that the trend of modern city life was more toward flat life than life in suburban homes. The reduction in the numbers of the average family was an important factor in this change. Two or three decades ago, when there were five or six in an average family, a large house with plenty of surrounding land was deemed necessary, but to-day the childless couple, or the couple with only one or two children, did not require such house room. A large living-room, where visitors could be entertained, a couple of bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and laundry were the chief essentials.\(^\text{23}\)

The number of persons inhabiting well-designed, purpose-built flats with all the ‘mod cons’, was of course very small, given that house conversions and tenements vastly out-numbered the purpose-built blocks. With their inconvenient, sometimes down-right squalid provisions for multiple-occupancy, many of the house conversions epitomised all that was abhorrent about compact urban living, yet failed to tarnish the association of purpose-built flats with a modern, cosmopolitan lifestyle.

In fact, judging from snippets posted in the social columns in the print media of the period, as well as postal directory searches, flat-living was adopted with considerable enthusiasm by Brisbane’s interwar social elite, attracting occupants from the professions (medical practitioners, lawyers, architects) and leading politicians, pastoralists and businessmen.\(^\text{24}\) Those who enjoyed overseas and interstate travel appear to have found flat-living, even if for only temporary periods, extremely convenient. Items such as the following, drawn from the social pages of *The Home* in March-April 1930, were not unusual:

Mr and Mrs Richard Harding have returned from England and have taken Miss Kate Cannan’s flat at Auchenflower during the latter’s absence in the East.\(^\text{25}\)

Sir Lyttleton and Lady Groom and Miss Jessie Groom, who have taken up their residence in Brisbane, have taken one of Mrs Cecil Palmer’s flats at Palmarosa for six months.\(^\text{26}\)

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\(^{24}\) For example, Simla Flats, Brisbane’s first identified purpose-designed block erected in 1921, immediately attracted a number of well-known Brisbane residents, including George Gerald Hutton (the Queensland Government Architect in 1922) and his wife (*Brisbane Courier*, 26 January 1922, p11; Watson and McKay 1984, p113).

\(^{25}\) *The Home*, 1 March 1930, p13.

Chapter 8: Tabloid living
Glamorising the flat lifestyle

Glamorising the flat lifestyle
Throughout the interwar period the image of flat-dwellers as ‘moderns’ enjoying a glamorous lifestyle free of the restraints of family and household responsibilities was sustained in contemporary Australian newspapers and lifestyle magazines, which promoted flats as sophisticated alternatives to suburban living:

Flat life is usually justified on the score of convenience to the individual, but frequently flat-dwellers will confess to an absolute loathing of conventional suburban domesticity. They make no secret of the fact that they abominate the whirring sound of a lawnmower, particularly if they supply the motive power on Saturday afternoons. Flat life, in short, is the easy way out of the drudgery of ordinary housework, and, for that reason, it is appreciated by many women. … Carried to its extreme in Australia flat life has tended to Bohemianism and unorthodoxy.27

Associating flats with the glamorous lifestyles of the internationally rich and famous was an effective and popular means of reinforcing the image of modern sophistication bestowed on flat-dwellers. Celebrities were solicited for their views on flat-life and descriptions and photographs of their glamorous flats were ever-popular in women’s and lifestyle magazines. Interviews with well-known expatriate Australians living overseas in a glamorous flat – usually in London or Paris - were equally popular, with descriptions and photographs of the flat decor and clever appointments.28

There was a fantasy quality to these articles, a number of which explored the notion of the ‘dream flat’ or ‘ideal flat’ as envisaged by women (rarely men) from a range of backgrounds – from film stars to the social elite to ‘career girls’. The more affluent women emphasised the glamour and cosmopolitanism of flat-living, romanticising about wonderful interiors, city views and provision for live-in domestic help, all of which assisted in entertaining friends; career girls tended to idealise the functionality of a small flat such that it could be managed easily by one or two occupants.29

28 See for example articles such as Isabel Ramsay, ‘An Australian Woman and Her Modern Paris Flat’ in The Home, 1 May 1930, pp36-37.
29 In March 1927, for example, the Brisbane Sunday Mail published a London interview with popular actress Margaret Bannerman, star of British theatre and Hollywood films, in which she elucidated the qualities she was looking for in her ‘dream flat’. She was content with a small number of rooms, but they were to be beautifully furnished and appointed and cleverly fitted out with built-in cabinets. Fundamentals included central heating, refrigerator, telephone and intercom. A maid was essential, and hence ‘a really nice bedroom for the maid, too, preferably with a lively outlook’ was necessary (Sunday Mail, 20 March 1927, p21). See also articles such as: ‘If I Were A Builder - Various Ideas for the Flat Builder’ in

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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
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The source of greatest inspiration for the association of flats with glamour and luxury was the United States, which had a much longer history of living in flats, tenements and apartments than Australia. In New York in particular the apartments of the affluent had become ‘truly palatial’ by the 1920s. Some suites occupied entire floors, or were of two or three levels (simplexes, duplexes and triplexes). Multi-storey apartments often contained rooms of double-height. For example, 660 Park Avenue, designed in 1926, contained nine full-floor apartments, and ‘a spectacular maisonette consisting of the building’s entire first, second and third floors’, lavishly decorated, with double-height living room, dining room and library. To paraphrase Andrew Alpern, duplex suites and very spacious one-level apartments were popular with New York’s upper classes because they created the illusion of residing in a grand detached house.30

Britain, renowned for its detached and semi-detached houses, conversely also provided Australians with some extraordinary examples of affluent-living in flats. With ‘the servant problem’ intensifying in the 1930s, flats for the middle and upper classes were gaining popularity in London. In October 1936, for example, Brisbane’s Sunday Mail ran an article describing a planned new block of 12 ‘millionaire flats’ along the lines of American luxury flats, about to be erected in Mayfair. As ‘London's most super-luxurious block of flats’, each flat, of two levels, fully air-conditioned, but unfurnished, was proposed to rent at £3,000 per annum. On the lower level of each was the living room, dining room, ‘library lounge’, kitchen, ‘complete quarters for a butler’, four maids’ bedrooms, and a maids’ sitting-room; on the upper level were ‘eight luxurious bedrooms, each with its individual bathroom, fitted with every comfort imaginable’. At the core of each flat was ‘a hall, 10 feet by 50 feet, shaped like a well, with a spiral staircase leading to an encircling gallery upon which the bedrooms open’.31

The images of luxury flat-living with which Brisbane residents were most familiar came from Sydney, the nation’s ‘flat capital’. Throughout the interwar years the fashionable, nationally-distributed Sydney magazine The Home, for example, published regular descriptions of the interiors of glamorous Australian (mostly Sydney, occasionally Melbourne) flats. The magazine promoted flats as convenient pieds-à-terre for the

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30 Alpern, 1975, pp i (foreward by Harmon H Goldstone) and p8.
31 Sunday Mail, 4 October 1936, p9.
affluent middle classes, or versatile apartments for modern, upwardly-mobile city workers. Never were they presented as housing for inner urban proletariats. For example, Mr J.R. McGregor’s flat in Strathkyle Flats, Sydney, illustrated in The Home, represented a ‘cultured’ lifestyle experienced by comparatively few Australians:

It has not been possible to show more than one room of this flat, all of which is beautifully furnished and adorned with good pictures. The furniture was specially designed by Mr Sam Rowe for Mr McGregor, and is carried out in Australian hardwoods. Above the cabinet is one of Arthur Streeton’s finest Hawkesbury landscapes, and on the right an excellent example of George Lambert’s recent work.32

Again, in 1931, The Home ran photographs of the interior of the Potts Point flat of the magazine’s publisher, Sydney Ure Smith, a recognised connoisseur of books and paintings. The interior decoration was a mix of the modern and the antique, and the captions to the photographs reinforced the occupant’s cosmopolitanism:

Above: A corner of a room in the flat of Mr Sydney Ure Smith, 41 Macleay Street, Potts Point. The modern cabinet is of grey-green lacquer. The rich cream frames emphasise the brilliance of the Japanese prints hanging on an ivory coloured wall.

A bookcase of rare modern editions in Mr Sydney Ure Smith’s flat. Between the two red, Bristol glass bottles hangs the famous ‘Cauliflower, Carrot and Egg’, a still life painting by the late George Lambert, ARA.33

The trade journal Building similarly published regular reports on the latest modern Sydney flat developments, or the glamorous lifestyles of well-known Australian (usually Sydney) flat-dwellers. In 1930, for example, the journal published a description of a new block of Sydney flats overlooking the harbour and city, erected by and for master builder WA Dettmann, who incorporated a penthouse flat (‘A Connoisseur’s Home’) in the development as his private residence. The penthouse was luxurious:

In addition to all the usual rooms, this flat possesses a billiard room, a ballroom, a sun room, and a large conservatory and everything that is likely to affect the comfort and desirability of his home. ... [the entrance hall showcases] the private collection of Mr W.E. Dettmann, and forms a small record of his extensive travels all over the globe. ...34

32 The Home, 1 December 1920, p42.
33 The Home, 1 December 1931, p47.
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Again, in the late 1930s, as streamlined ‘Art Moderne’ style became popular in the best Sydney flat developments, both The Home and Building ran articles on the ultra-modern flat of Mr and Mrs George Edwards, ‘the well-known radio-players’ at Point Piper. The flat featured air-conditioning, built-in radio and gramophone, a built-in cocktail cabinet mirror-backed with Orrefors glass, light-coloured streamlined timber furniture, and an extremely modern decor in brown, beige and cream. The photographs in The Home were taken by Max Dupain.  

The world of interwar flat-dwellers as presented in The Home and Building defined the epitome of Australian glamour, sophistication and cosmopolitanism. It was an ideal to be desired, emulated, or aspired to – a kind of middle-class urban ‘dreaming’ associated with living in the modern, purpose-built Australian flat. Whether this was achievable for any but the extremely wealthy was debatable, although medium-sized Sydney flats compared extremely favourably with overseas flats in terms of the facilities and the sense of luxury and glamour offered to tenants. For example, Robert Pollock, a Sydney architect who toured the world in 1929, reported on his return that although Sydney’s larger flats of ‘eight rooms and servants’ quarters’ were inferior to the luxury flats of New York and London, which could command rentals of from £1,000 to £6,000 per annum, in lesser-sized flats, Sydney had much to offer tenants:

In flats of small and medium size Sydney’s were superior to those overseas in design, interior finish, and equipment, whilst the entrances compared very favourably with the best overseas. Rentals of that type of flat were lower in Sydney than overseas, in many cases being less than half. ... People in Sydney of moderate means could enjoy the comforts and conveniences that were only available to the wealthy in other cities ... 

Many of Sydney's new flats contained facilities rarely transposed to the small-scale suburban developments erected in Brisbane during the interwar period. They constituted an ideal rather than a reality. Consider the following description of a luxury flat development erected in 1927-1928 on the Sydney foreshore, which, while not targeted at the most affluent in society, still displayed ‘sumptuous fittings’:

35 Building, 24 March 1938, p38; The Home, 1 February 1938, p5.
Take one water frontage close to city and erect 46 flats in two buildings. Add special wallpaper, with a different design for each room, with public telephones and caretakers, lawns and gardens and afternoon tea pallinate. Mix in hygienic built-in garbage chutes and hot water. Garnish with a private swimming bath 72 feet by 45 feet, and dress this permanently with white sandy bottom.

This is the formula used in the construction of two buildings of flats just erected at McMahon’s Point, Sydney. Though the flats look – and are – luxurious, rentals are lower than those of average homes. The finish is excellent and the interior design utilises all possible space and saves labour.\textsuperscript{37}

Nor could any Brisbane flat development of this era rival St James Flats in Hyde Park, Sydney, erected in 1929 and promoted as the ‘acme of comfort’. The largest block of flats built in Australia to that date, the 11 storey building comprised shops, service station and garage on the ground floor and 98 self-contained flats on the floors above. The flats were modest in size, but the facilities provided for tenants were impressive and very much in the style of American serviced apartments:

The top floor contains a ballroom, lounge, billiard-room, and up-to-date restaurant and roof garden. The building is served with three electric lifts, and there is also an electric hot water service. Each flat has also its own telephone and interphone service. ... A feature of the management of the building is that every service, including hot water, gas, electric light, refrigeration, laundry, and cleaning is included in the rental, and tenants also have the use of the ballroom, lounge, and billiard-rooms.\textsuperscript{38}

Dozens of very fine flat developments were erected in inner Sydney in the interwar years, but a pinnacle in Sydney flat construction was reached with the completion of the Macleay-Regis at Potts Point in 1939. The development offered 87 flats in 10 storeys, with typically 10 flats per floor. The modestly-sized but well-appointed one- and two-bedroom flats were enhanced by a range of tenant facilities, including a kitchen service on the eighth floor providing meals (at a cost); on the ground floor several shops (including chemist, florist and grocer), a large community garage and private garages; and laundries, drying rooms, boiler room, and luggage store room on the lower ground floor. Appointments in each flat included a refrigerator, gas cooker, and a ‘telephonette’ system connected to the internal switch and ground floor shops. The entrance lobby was an impressive feature, ‘spaciously and luxuriously finished’.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Daily Mail}, 7 February 1928, p.3.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Brisbane Courier}, 19 February 1929, p.3.
giving access to two elevators, but the penthouse flat was the crowning feature:

The eastern wing of the topmost floor is occupied by a penthouse containing living room, dining room, kitchen, servery, five bedrooms, each with private bathroom, and a spare room as well as a spacious roof garden. The living room itself is 30 feet long, finished with oak parquetry and has a beautiful stone fireplace. The ceiling is barrel vaulted, while the wall surfaces at each end of the room above the circular headed French doors are infilled with mural paintings in colour.

... A feature of the interior is the wrought metal chandeliers of particularly attractive design. The dining room is a completely square room, one wall of which is entirely occupied by a large bay window glazed in amber cathedral glass. The remainder of the walls are completely panelled in oak, while the ceiling is a rich Tudor design.

The large windows to the main bedrooms are fitted with special fittings, which enable the sashes to fold back against the jambs and thus leave the whole side of the room open, a most attractive feature when it is realised that practically the whole of Sydney, both city and Harbour, lie before one’s gaze ... 39

That Brisbane flats were not of this calibre was immaterial; it was association and perception that mattered. Living in a small, inner-suburban flat in Brisbane was about as modern as life could be in this city in the interwar period. Flat-dwelling was promoted as a fashionable and convenient way of life, attractive particularly to those who considered themselves beyond suburbia, perhaps even a little cosmopolitan in their outlook. In subscribing to an internationally recognised and popular lifestyle, Brisbane flat-dwellers were endowed with a veneer of sophistication rarely attributed to the occupants of contemporary ‘nappy-belt’ suburban dwellings.

This sense of connection with an international world of modern glamour was reinforced in the nomenclature of many of Brisbane’s interwar blocks of purpose-built flats. While some carried names which had a more personal association for the owners (Foxthorn Court (1926) in New Farm, for example, was built for Mr and Mrs W.E. Fox); or an historical association with an earlier residence on the site (Ravenswood Flats (1930) in New Farm were constructed on the site of an 1860 residence of that name); the more ambitious promoters named their flat developments after famous overseas flat buildings or residential hotels, or chose names suggestive of royalty and high status.

39 Building, 24 April 1939, pp17, 54.
There were two Hampton Courts in Brisbane – at New Farm (1927) and Clayfield (1938) – as well as York House Flats (1922) at Bowen Hills; Sandringham Flats (1933) at Spring Hill; Coronet Flats (1933) at New Farm; and Regina Court Flats (1939) at Highgate Hill.

There were Astor Flats at Upper Roma Street in the city (1929) and in Brunswick Street, New Farm (c.1934), and Astor Court Flats at Spring Hill (1934) – probably referencing the famous Astor House Hotel (1836) in New York, demolished in stages from 1913-1926. A 1941 flat development on Wickham Terrace was named The Biltmore, in reference to a chain of palatial American residential hotels of that name.

Other blocks were given romantic names suggestive of exotic places – such as Hollywood Flats (1928) at Milton, San Remo Flats (1934) at South Brisbane, and Casa Del Mar Flats (1934) at New Farm.

There were also names associated with legend, myth and fantasy – such as Avalon Flats (1929) at New Farm (in Arthurian legend, the island of Avalon represented earthly paradise) and Halcyon Flats (1938) at West End (the halcyon being a bird ‘fabled by ancients to breed about the time of the winter solstice in a nest floating on the sea, and to have the power of charming winds and waves into calmness’).

40 Astor House Hotel opened in 1836 and soon became the most famous hotel in America. The six-storey, 309-roomed building was constructed for John Jacobs Astor, who became America’s first multi-millionaire (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astor_House viewed 11 October 2010).

41 The Biltmore chain was established by John McEntree Bowman who in turn was referencing the Vanderbilt family’s Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, with its substantial and elaborate 1890s ‘chateau’ – one of the largest residential projects of its era – designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biltmore_Hotels and http://www.biltmore.com/our_story/our_history/default.asp viewed 11 October 2010).

42 Macquarie Dictionary, pp139, 962.
Lifestyle advantages

At the core of the growing acceptance of flat-living in Brisbane during the interwar years lay the willingness of the middle-classes to 'down-size' their homes, families and possessions as they embraced the benefits of the modern age. For property developers, architects, agents and others with a financial interest in the survival of new flat construction, this quest for modernity was harnessed as a powerful marketing tool in their promotion of the advantages of compact living. Invariably, promoters of the flat lifestyle drew attention to the convenience of residing close to the city centre and places of work; to the reduced costs of travel, maintenance and furnishing; to the attraction of labour-saving devices such as refrigerators, piped hot water, and refuse incinerators; to the reduced need for domestic help; and to the ultimate outcome of all of these benefits: greater time and money to invest in leisure activities and the social life. Some also exploited the promise of an independent lifestyle for women. As one contemporary commentator suggested:

The self-contained flat has a certain charm and some advantages. It is easily vacated where there is a fancy to change the surroundings. There is generally only one item in expenses, the rent, and the occupier is free from the worry over ever-increasing rates and upkeep. There is less housework in a flat, and usually it can be managed without the expense of permanent maids, as its compactness reduces the amount of service to a minimum.43

Solving ‘the servant problem’

One of the great advantages of the small, compact flat fitted with labour-saving devices and appointments was the reduced need for domestic help. In a period in which domestic servants were difficult if not impossible to obtain, the labour-saving lifestyle of the modern flat offered the housewife greater ease of maintenance and reputedly, more leisure time. By the late 1910s, living in a compact flat was being promoted as a logical response to ‘the servant problem’.44

While the difficulty of obtaining domestic servants was considered a ‘feminine problem’ and very much in the sphere of women’s interests, it was a vexing issue which affected many levels of society and generated wide public comment during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

44 See for example ‘The Australian Home. The Problem of the Flat’ in Building, 12 December 1919, p57.
With electricity revolutionizing the nature of industrial and commercial work in Australia from the 1890s, the difficulty of finding good home-help intensified as working-class women found occupations outside their traditional field of domestic service. Opportunities for employment in factories, offices and retail stores were seized by women who embraced the idea of earning an income unencumbered by the restrictions on personal freedom usually associated with domestic service. The Great War (1914-1918) exacerbated this situation. With around 300,000 young Australian men (from a national population of 4 million) serving overseas, women gained the opportunity to fill a broader range of positions, including jobs in light manufacturing, gaining confidence in their abilities to sustain jobs in the workforce outside the home.\(^{45}\)

By the 1920s domestic service in Australia had become a job of last resort. A 1920 contributor to *The Home* pithily summarised the situation:

> The greatest aspect is the lack of incentive – of ambition. A girl may be proud of working a soap-stamping machine, or of presiding at the haberdashery counter, or of being sixth from the OP side in the third row; but she will never boast of being a parlour-maid.\(^{46}\)

Competition for domestic servants was fierce. As one contemporary commentator suggested:

> ... to-day it is not the good ‘General’ out-of-work who must be appealed to (that unit is long since non est), it is the ‘General’ enjoying high wages whose curiosity must be roused just enough to inspire her to see what 'she' is like!\(^{47}\)

A link between the rapidly diminishing supply of domestic servants and the trend for living in flats was early identified by contemporary commentators, particularly by contributors to the Sydney magazines and journals, that city having an earlier and broader experience of flat-living than Brisbane in the 1920s. The inability to attract and retain domestic servants was perceived as a significant contributing factor in the shift to flat-living. Consider these contemporary comments from the period 1920 to 1922:

\(^{45}\) *The Home*, 1 June 1921, pp16, 58, 60; McIvor and McIvor 1994, p5; Frances, 1992, pp246-7; for further discussion of the changing nature of women’s work in the early twentieth century, see also Kingston, 1975 and Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Mary Shute, *Worth her salt: women at work in Australia*, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982.


… servants, in all probability, will never again be available in such numbers as they were in the past for private home life … Hence, it has become imperative that the good housewife, or practical head of the family, whilst acknowledging on the one hand the beauty, sanctity and other advantages of suburban living, realises only too well its disadvantages; and, following the line of least resistance, adopts the flat system.\footnote{Flats, Their Development and Advantages’ in Building, 11 December 1920, pp60-1.} and

If the present-day problem of domestic assistance in small households is not solved it will eventually result in a widespread modification in the living conditions of the largest and soundest section of the community. To some extent the process of modification is already apparent in the extending use of flats and apartment houses.\footnote{‘Luciana’, ‘Household Services, Limited. A Possible Solution of the Australian Domestic Problem’ in The Home, 1 June 1921, p16.}

and

Since the labour problem has loomed so largely in Australia, that servants are almost unprocurable, … about half the world has had to resort either actually or virtually to ‘flatting it’.\footnote{‘Flats For Family Life. Solving the Problem of Designing Flats for Families’ in Building, 11 March 1922, p66.}

For flat occupants who still hoped to obtain the services of at least one live-in domestic, the average flat tended to be too compact to accommodate both employer and employee. In Brisbane some of the earlier, better-quality purpose-built flat developments made provision for a maid’s bedroom in each flat, but these rooms were small and held limited attraction for the intended occupant. Langshaw House (1922) and Elystan Court (1932) in New Farm, Kia-Ora Flats (1924) in South Brisbane, Scott House Flats (1925) in Kangaroo Point, Craigston Flats (1928) and Carrington Flats (1933) in Spring Hill, and Mareeba Flats (1928) in Teneriffe, exemplified this trend.

For flat-dwellers seeking domestic help, the services of a ‘daily’ or ‘weekly’ general servant was the more usual practice.\footnote{Employing part-time assistance with the cleaning in a flat was a universally common practice. As one ‘girl wage-earner’ flat-dweller wrote in the London Daily Chronicle in 1928: ‘With the aid of a carpet sweeper, a mop, and a duster I am able to keep my rooms clean and tidy with very little trouble, and then once a fortnight I allow myself the extravagance of a “charlady”, who gives the entire flat a miniature spring cleaning’ (re-published in Sunday Mail, 2 September 1928, p28).} At Langshaw House, for example, tenants appear to have given up the quest for live-in help soon after the block was built.\footnote{For example: ‘WANTED a competent woman, wash and clean, on Tuesdays, 2 pr family, reference. Flat 1, Langshaw House, Langshaw-street, New Farm’ (Brisbane Courier, 3 January 1925, p13).}
Little evidence has been found in Brisbane of interwar flat complexes in which the services of a domestic staff were shared by tenants, as in some of the larger Sydney blocks of flats and overseas. Most Brisbane interwar flats appear to have been maintained without the assistance of domestic servants, or with part-daily or weekly help only, made possible by the compact nature of the premises, and the increasing availability and affordability of modern household appliances to assist with housework.

The attraction of a well-appointed flat with modern services

Flat-living as an attractive alternative to life in the detached suburban residence was contemplated by the middle classes only when gas and electricity for domestic use was made readily available, and flats could be provisioned with the latest in modern electric and gas services and appliances. Further, the gradual social acceptance of flats as permanent or long-term places of residence was largely a consequence of the nexus that was occurring between the shifting roles of women within the home, and the proliferation of modern, labour-saving household appliances.

As Kay Saunders and Ray Evans have argued, by the 1920s middle-class Australian women who were no longer able to find, retain or afford domestic servants, had been transformed from ‘mistresses’ of their homes to ‘housewives’. This transition was made possible if not always palatable by the increasing availability and affordability of new gas and electrical appliances to assist in maintaining the home. During the interwar years women’s and lifestyle magazines and the house and building columns in the weekly press were filled with articles and advertisements describing the latest in modern electrical ‘servants’, including vacuum cleaners, floor polishers, toasters and hot-plates, electric refrigerators, dish-washers, washing machines and clothes dryers. Slogans such as ‘Electric Homes Are HAPPY HOMES’ were powerful advertisements. Gas cookers and gas hot water systems were promoted as fast, efficient and cost- and labour-saving.

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54 Refer to the article ‘A Practical Study of Mechanical Substitutes for Mary Jane (deceased);’ pp86, 88 in The Home, 1 December 1920, for an interesting insight into the variety of electric household appliances available in Australia by the 1920s, for those who could afford the purchase price.
55 Telegraph, 1 September 1936, p18.
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The attention paid to domestic appliances by inventors was marked, and articles describing clever household inventions for the servant-less housewife were of endless interest.\(^{56}\)

The introduction of new household appliances had a profound impact on the design of the Australian home. In the past, Brisbane houses of quite modest size had required the assistance of paid domestic labour – often in the form of the ‘general servant’ who could cook, clean and launder. In an era in which the supply of domestic electricity was limited and expensive, homes reliant on wood combustion stoves, fire-places for heating rooms, the laundry ‘copper’, and candle, kerosene or gas lighting, required constant and arduous cleaning. Without refrigerators and freezers, meal preparation and clearing was time-consuming and unremitting. Without the assistance of electrical appliances, doing the family laundry required an entire day’s work to wash and dry, and another to iron. Timber floors had to be scrubbed, and carpets swept and beaten. The average domestic residence – let alone the larger homes of the affluent – was a highly labour-intensive proposition.

By the late 1910s, in response to the scarcity of women willing to engage in domestic service, Australian architects were being called upon to simplify domestic architecture and to design houses and flats with ‘an absolute minimum of accommodation’ and ‘a compact system of services’.\(^{57}\) The smaller, streamlined, electricity- and gas-based home (whether house or flat) was a direct response to an era in which ‘generals’, cooks, housemaids, parlour-maids, kitchen-maids, chauffeurs, grooms, and gardeners were virtually impossible to find and increasingly expensive to employ.

In the wake of the economic depression of the early 1930s, Brisbane pursued modernity in the home – whether house or flat – with a determination that had been lacking in the 1920s. For the middle classes in particular, the modern streamlined home, designed to minimise maintenance, with less decorative detailing, plainer surfaces and in-built tiled bathrooms and kitchens, and appointed with labour-saving devices, had become an affordable reality:

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\(^{56}\) See for example Fortescue in *The Home*, September 1920, p54; ‘New Inventions. Labour-Saving Devices’ in *Sunday Mail*, 12 October 1924, p16.

\(^{57}\) *Building*, 12 December 1919, p57.
Two slogans apply strongly ‘Economy in upkeep’ and ‘labour saving appliances’, and these more strongly suggest modern design than any amount of detail. ... Bathrooms are not now a luxury, but a necessity. ... anything that makes for ‘cleanliness, comfort, or convenience’ comes within the scope of modern design. An electric iron, is clean, simple, effective and quickly made available. A gas stove ... is another attraction. A vacuum cleaner deserves plenty of points for connection, as it not only removes the dust as well as a broom but collects it which a broom does not. ... 58

As compensation for relinquishing the greater space and privacy afforded by a suburban house and garden, the tenants of well-designed, good quality flats were offered a range of modern conveniences and appointments not found in older middle-class homes, and in new homes only at a much greater cost to the occupants.

A ducted refrigeration service was standard in the better-class new flat developments, as were reticulated water and ducted hot water systems. As one contemporary suggested, ‘the labour-saving devices of the modern flat not only offer more freedom to the housewife, but compensate for the higher rental’.59

With economy of scale being applied to the construction and fitting-out of multiple-residency dwellings, a wider section of the Brisbane community was being offered access to affordable, modern, streamlined, well-equipped places of abode, albeit in a compact format. There was considerable truth in the argument that flats could offer greater facilities than the average suburban house.

By the mid-1930s the average new Brisbane home included a partly in-built kitchen and bathroom, electric lighting, a powerpoint in some rooms, a hot water heater (usually gas powered), probably a gas cooker rather than a wood-burning range, and possibly was served by reticulated water. However, new homes of this era did not always include an inside water closet (depending on the availability and affordability of sewerage and septic systems) and did not provide refrigeration as part of the cost of construction. Although a contemporary commentator claimed in 1936 ‘There are few homes in which there is not an iron, a boiling jug, a toaster, a refrigerator, a wireless

58 Building, 12 November 1934, p55.
59 Courier-Mail, 10 August 1937, p18.

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receiver, a radiator or a fan\textsuperscript{60}, this did not accurately reflect conditions in Brisbane, where not all sectors of society were able to participate in this middle-class vision of modernity.

This is precisely where the modern flat had its advantages, and as flat-living gained in popularity, flat-dwellers became more sophisticated in their expectations about what should be provided for tenant comfort and convenience in these compact homes. Consider the following list of features that one Brisbane architect considered were in demand in 1938 by potential occupants of good quality flats:

There is letting value in features such as an attractive entrance, entrance halls in each apartment, large rooms, cupboard space, well-equipped bathroom and tiled floors and walls, fireplace in the living room, good hardware and light fittings, artistically-treated walls, cross-ventilation in bedrooms, kitchen large enough to function properly, with full equipment built in – refrigeration, garbage disposal, dining alcove, full-size gas range, ironing board, power points, and exhaust fan ventilation.

Rentals are also influenced by general services such as laundry (private or general), storage rooms, food services, window cleaning, and vacuum cleaning.\textsuperscript{61}

As the fashion for flat-living intensified during the second half of the 1930s, developers of the better class of flat building competed to supply the latest finishes, fixtures and conveniences, largely fulfilling tenant expectations about what constituted modernity and glamour in Brisbane flats (refer to Chapter 7). Consider Juniper Flats at Kangaroo Point, a two-storeyed brick block of six self-contained flats completed in mid-1937. Set high above Ferry Street and facing east, the design took advantage of extensive views over New Farm and Kangaroo Point, and ‘prevailing summer breezes’. Attracting a rental of £2/10/- per week, the flats were large, airy, soundproofed, and comprised two bedrooms, lounge, dining-room, kitchen, bathroom, water closet and an enclosed verandah which could be used as a sleep-out. They were equipped with ducted hot water and refrigeration and built-in cupboards. There were four garages in the landscaped grounds, and a tennis court was planned. Of particular note were the interior finishes.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{60} ‘The Magical Servant. Electric Homes Are HAPPY HOMES’ in Telegraph, 1 September 1936, p18.

The context of this article was unstated, the comments possibly being more relevant to Sydney than Brisbane.

\textsuperscript{61} Courier Mail, 26 July 1938, p17.

\textsuperscript{62} Sunday Mail, 20 June 1937, p25.
An independent lifestyle for women

Despite (or due to) the ‘tabloid’ nature of the accommodation, interwar flats proved extremely popular with women. Flat-living offered emancipation from the drudgery of housework, and for unmarried and widowed women in particular, provided the opportunity to manage their own home independent of family. The compact modern flat, situated in a convenient and respectable locality, offered women a measure of independence which, perhaps due to financial, social or familial constraints, may not have been achievable with other forms of residential accommodation.

For widows without a young family, moving from the family home to a compact flat in one stroke eliminated the expense and labour-intensive nature of maintaining a detached house and garden while providing greater opportunity (in time and money) for leisure pursuits. The association of widows with flats was notable in Sydney by the 1920s, and a similar pattern seems to have emerged in Brisbane in the interwar years. (Refer also to Chapter 9, regarding the association between widowed persons and flat ownership in Brisbane).

For unmarried women of all ages, the compact flat was an attractive option to remaining in the family home, or struggling to maintain an inherited suburban residence. For young women eager to leave the family home but not yet ready for marriage, a small flat provided a measure of security and freedom not found in alternative accommodation such as lodging and boarding houses.

The strong appeal of flats to young ‘business girls’ and ‘bachelor girls’ (to use the terminology of the era) was recognised early in the debate on the pros and cons of flat-living, especially in Sydney during the 1920s, where the ‘bachelor flat’, a notch above a bed-sitting room in a tenement building, became extremely popular with women seeking an alternative to boarding-house life. In overseas cities, flats, apartments, residential hotels and residential clubs exclusively for women were gaining popularity.

Few Brisbane developers appeared willing to risk targeting a flat building at such a highly specific market, in a city in which flats constituted a comparatively small percentage of residential accommodation. Only a couple of new interwar multiple-

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63 Refer, for example, to ‘Sidelights on Flat-land’ in Home, 1 December 1920, pp84-5.
dwelling buildings purpose-intended for single women have been identified. The earliest was St Helier (no longer extant) in South Brisbane, erected in 1929-1930. Although promoted as ‘flats’, they were not self-contained and were in reality one-roomed furnished tenements, 16ft by 10ft (4.8m x 3m):

SOMETHING NEW IN FLATS

Mr Chas. H Griffin has designed a block of six self-contained brick flats in Grey Street, South Brisbane, which are something novel in this city for the purpose for which they are intended. The flats are designed for single girls, and the idea, whilst prevalent in the South, is new to Brisbane.

Each flat consists of a large bed-sitting room, with kitchenette attached, and opens out on to a central courtyard, containing neatly-kept lawns. Each flat will be comfortably furnished, and contain bath and lavatory accommodation connected with sewerage, one bath to each three persons. Gas cooking and electric lighting will be possible. Each kitchenette contains sink and draining board, and the walls will be tastefully decorated. A laundry, with tubs, gas copper, and electric iron will be provided.65

A more substantial flat project for single women was Bulolo Flats in Fortitude Valley, a two-storeyed block of eight self-contained bachelor flats built in 1934 for T.C. Beirne, a Brisbane businessman and philanthropist, and owner of a well-known Valley department store. The flats were intended for the use of single country girls who had come to the city to work in Beirne’s nearby emporium. The concept of the bachelor flat, which offered ‘more privacy and greater comfort than are to be obtained in boarding houses’, was well-known in Sydney and Melbourne, but considered new to Brisbane:

These flats are designed to accommodate business girls who, not having their own home in Brisbane, desire the atmosphere of a home of their own making. ... The block will comprise eight apartments, each containing a large bed-sitting room (with sleeping-out balcony adjoining), kitchenette (with all conveniences, including built-in cupboards), tiled bathroom (with built-in bath, hot-water geyser, and built-in presses). Each apartment will have a private entrance, also a trades entrance, with a ‘trades window’, where deliveries may be left. For the use of each tenant laundries will be provided on a flat roof.66

66 Courier-Mail, 27 July 1934, p25. See also Telegraph, 31 July 1934, p15 and ABJQ, 10 August 1934, p23.
Flats intended solely for female tenants were an extrapolation of the hostel system for women and girls, which in Brisbane dates from the mid-nineteenth century and was closely associated with charitable work.\(^67\) These hostels reflected societal concern that single women without family were in moral danger and required a measure of protection not afforded in the average boarding or lodging house or mixed-gender tenement or flat building. This concept also appears to have motivated T.C. Beirne, who was a devout Catholic with a close connection to Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane\(^68\), in constructing Bulolo Flats for his female workers.

**Greater leisure time**

Flat-living was considered synonymous with a leisure-focussed lifestyle. As a product of the modern age, the ‘flat fashion’ in Brisbane was contemporaneous with new approaches to work and leisure. Improved working conditions and the establishment of the basic wage in the early 1900s had made greater leisure time available to a wider section of the working community, who were able to take advantage of the expansion of mass entertainments and other recreational and social pursuits made possible through new technologies (such as film, gramophones, radio and automobiles).

By the 1920s, the widespread adoption of the private automobile had revolutionised ideas about how to spend leisure time\(^69\), which in turn affected ideas about home life and the nature of the modern home. Writing in defence of new, streamlined homes, a contributor to the daily press in 1930 argued:

> Our entertainment, nowadays, is away from the home. We have come out of its seclusion to live our lives more publicly. … New interests, new duties, more intense living, a thousand and one things have changed our outlook, so that our leisure is becoming more treasured every day. And it is this new outlook, this urge for time saving and practicability that has created the new architecture and caused the long-delayed break with false convention.\(^70\)

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\(^67\) One of the earliest was the Servants’ Home in Ann Street, opened in 1866 to provide accommodation for young women new to the colony while they sought employment (QHR, ‘Brisbane School of Arts’, 600072).


\(^69\) Telegraph, 2 May 1933, p6.

\(^70\) Sunday Mail, 25 May 1930, p24.
Similarly, a commentator weighing the attractions of the modern flat against those of the suburban dwelling in 1933, claimed:

... improved transport makes possible easy access to the city but it also has altered the whole concept of home life. Families are no longer satisfied to spend their leisure moments pottering around the garden and entertaining their friends in the home. They prefer to go to the seaside or country and visit the city for amusement purposes nearly as often as they do in the process of earning their living.\(^71\)

A key distinction between life in a compact flat and life in the average suburban house was the reduction in housework and lack of garden maintenance associated with flat life. In principle, flat-dwellers had greater time to enjoy ever-expanding social and recreational pursuits and entertainments. This freedom to enjoy guilt-free leisure activity became an attractive marketing tool in selling the flat lifestyle.

For flat-dwellers sufficiently affluent to maintain a private automobile, flat-living offered week-ends free for motoring to the country or seaside or visiting friends. Alternatively, for the many flat-dwellers who did not possess an automobile, the proximity of the inner-suburban flats to shopping, entertainment and recreational facilities made the lifestyle attractive:

In the case of a high rental proposition, the prospect [prospective tenant] will want to know if it is an established or coming social centre, with good buildings in the locality; if it is close to the active life of the city or frankly suburban; if there is easy access to good-class business districts; and if there is convenient shopping facilities near by. Flat-dwellers are also interested to know whether a building is handy to theatres, restaurants, and garages.\(^72\)

This was the era of local picture theatres, dance halls and skating rinks; and of city centre and Fortitude Valley picture palaces, milk bars, cafés, restaurants,\(^73\) Websters chain of cake shops, and the big department stores – Finney Isles, Allan and Stark, Edwards and Lamb, McDonnell and East, McWhirter’s, TC Beirne’s, and Overell’s. All of these central city and Valley facilities were a short tram ride away (mostly in the 1d

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\(^71\) *Telegraph*, 24 October 1933, p15.

\(^72\) *Courier-Mail*, 26 July 1938, p17 (based on an article by E.J.A. Weller in ABJQ, 10 October 1935, pp10-12, 14).

\(^73\) Cafés and restaurants of this period were very much the province of Greek immigrants. By 1910 there were already 26 Greek cafes and ‘oyster saloons’ (fish shops) in Brisbane (see Toni Risson, *Aphrodite and The Mixed Grill. Greek Cafés in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Ipswich, Qld: Toni Risson, 2007, p40).
sector) from the main inner-suburban flat districts of New Farm, Fortitude Valley, Spring Hill, South Brisbane, West End, and Kangaroo Point.

The extent to which flat-dwellers truly enjoyed substantially greater leisure-time to engage in the ‘social whirl’ is difficult to assess, but the image of flat-dwellers enjoying a carefree, recreational-based life-style was extraordinarily pervasive in the community. Consider the following example. In October 1936 Mrs Henry Robertson, President of the National Council of Women, when asked for her comments on a well-known London physician’s claim that women's 'neglect of cooking' was leading to a rise in digestive disorders, managed, in her defence of fresh food over tinned food, to state:

Flat-dwellers were no doubt content to have less work and more enjoyment. ... For attractiveness and digestibility she believed in fresh foods, but tins were probably handy in flats. ...

**Crowded living or cosy urban retreat?**

Despite the social and lifestyle attractions of tabloid living, there were disadvantages to consider, especially for families, as described in 1923:

People with families who have never lived in flats look on them with longing eyes. They seem to leave so little to do. They are so compact and cosy. There is promise of lots of free time to be spent out of doors. And probably the distance to town and the shops is short.

Altogether, the prospect is very attractive, until they test it. Then they find that the 'little to do' is never done; that small rooms, lumped together, are impossible to keep tidy. The one sitting-room has probably to serve as a bedroom at nights and this, in addition to the daily traffic of meals, etc, does not conduce to its restful atmosphere as a family living room.

The kitchen is nearly always small, poky, and often dark, so that the business of cooking and washing up is needlessly difficult ...

The weekly wash resolves itself into a weekly battle ... The clothes have to be carried downstairs or upstairs, washed, brought up or down again, ironed in some odd corner, and, in the winter, aired in the sitting-room, where is the only fireplace. ...

One cannot make a permanent home under such conditions. ...

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75 Nora Cooper writing for the *Australian Home Builder*, quoted in *Sunday Mail*, 9 December 1923, p12.

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Noise in flats
As illustrated by the above, noise in flats was a key detraction. Despite soundproofing requirements under Council by-laws, very few interwar flats successfully eliminated noise through party walls, ceilings, floors and open windows. Flat-dweller frustration with neighbour-noise was far from uncommon, as the following comments illustrate:

One can never tell in a flat when the people above will have a fancy to turn on the loud speaker [radio], enjoy jazz records, or indulge in a noisy midnight supper when one has settled to a night's repose.\(^76\)

and

As a flat-dweller, I hear my neighbour's loud speaker from 6.45 a.m. until I leave for the office, and on my return onwards to 11 p.m., and sometimes midnight.\(^77\)

One of the attractions of the compact flat was its proximity to public transport, providing ease of access to places of work, recreation and entertainment, but this came at a lifestyle cost. Many flats were located on major roads and along or near tramlines, which generated a high level of ambient noise. Brunswick Street in New Farm and Vulture Street in South Brisbane, for example, were major thoroughfares with tramlines. As the traffic increased and the popularity for detached housing declined, these roads attracted much flat development – particularly house conversions and purpose-built residential flats. On the other hand, Moray Street in New Farm accommodated a tramline yet attracted many very fine flat developments; the difference appears to have been the lack of motor vehicle traffic.

Compact nature of flats
For most Brisbane flat-dwellers, ‘tabloid living’ was not far from the reality. Contemporary commentators generally agreed that the distinguishing characteristic of a typical interwar flat was that it contained a smaller area, and a lesser number of rooms, than a detached house. Good quality, purpose-designed flats often were no smaller than much working-class housing, especially older cottages of two to four rooms plus a kitchen, but generally were more compact than middle-class housing.

\(^76\) ‘Flats and Bungalows – Comparison of Advantages’ in Sunday Mail, 13 July 1930, p26.
\(^77\) Letter to the editor in Courier-Mail, 27 September 1935, p19.
In the interwar years, larger flats were typically described as ‘charming’\(^{78}\), but small flats were popularly and euphemistically labelled ‘cosy’. A ‘cosy’ flat could encompass a multitude of inconvenient living arrangements, but seemingly no one wanted to destroy the illusion that flat-living was convenient and comfortable, or to imply that flat-dwellers were living in less than adequate conditions.\(^{79}\)

There is some difficulty in determining where ‘cosy’ ended and ‘inadequate’ commenced. As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the interwar community’s primary objections to flats and the lifestyle they engendered was the fear of overcrowding and the creation of ‘slum’ living conditions – a reaction to the ever-increasing, poorly-conceived, tenements and flats in houses converted for the purpose. However, if owners were prepared to accept a flat of just one or two rooms, as in the example of Miss Campbell at Moana footnoted above, perhaps this ‘cosy’ arrangement should not be viewed as a lower standard of living.

In 1933, Brisbane’s occupied flats and tenements averaged a little more than half the number of rooms in private houses (3.3 compared with 5.6).\(^{80}\) It is important to note that for census purposes the room tallies did not include bathrooms, water or earth closets, pantries or stores, but did include kitchens and enclosed verandahs, so a typical three-roomed flat comprised a bedroom, kitchen or kitchenette, living area, and a combined bathroom and water closet.\(^{81}\) This was compact living.

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\(^{78}\) Consider, for example, these published references to social life in Craigston Flats, Brisbane’s most prestigious interwar flats:

- Mrs Lance Jones and Mrs S.F. Macdonald combined forces and gave a delightful party in the former’s charming flat on Thursday, 8th January. (The Home, 2 February 1931, p3.)
- To announce the marriage of their younger son Arnold to Miss Eva Whatmore (Sydney), Dr and Mrs W.N. Robertson gave a cocktail and tea party at their charming flat, ‘Craigston’, Wickham Terrace, to their relatives and intimate friends. (The Home, 1 April 1932, p13.)

\(^{79}\) For example, in describing Moana, a large 1880s New Farm residence converted into flats in the early 1920s, F.E. Lord was careful not to denigrate the living arrangements of one of the owners, a Miss Campbell, who resided on the premises in the former kitchen wing, which ‘with a kitchenette partitioned off one end of the original kitchen and a dress cupboard built into the end of the passage in place of the server, constitutes a cosy flat now’ (Queenslander, 15 December 1932, p34).

\(^{80}\) The first figure includes both self-contained flats and non-self-contained tenements. With many of the latter being only one room, the value of the application of this statistic to flats generally and purpose-built flats in particular is problematic (Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2048).

As illustrated in Figure 8.1 below, in 1933 close to 69 per cent of Brisbane flats and tenements comprised two to four rooms, with only about 14 per cent containing five or six rooms. One-room dwellings (the majority of these probably were tenements) accounted for about 6 per cent. The number of flats and tenements with over six rooms stood at less than 2 per cent of the Brisbane total, and it is reasonable to assume that these were self-contained flats and not tenements.

![Figure 8.1](image)

Given the lack of rooms, it took little (furniture, belongings or persons) for smaller flats to appear extremely crowded, and there was limited scope to accommodate guests for extended visits.\(^8^3\)

Brisbane City Council measured ‘overcrowding’ in multiple-dwelling buildings in terms of the area of bedrooms, kitchens and water closets; the number of persons sharing bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms, and water or earth closets; and the percentage of each site occupied by the footprint of a flat or tenement building. Ordinances controlling the ratio of persons to common facilities in boarding houses, lodging houses and tenements were not well-defined, and abuses took place, but the regulation of facilities and space in flat buildings was quite specific from 1926, and strengthened in 1937.\(^8^4\)

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\(^8^3\) See for example Sunday Mail, 6 April 1924, p12.
\(^8^4\) Refer to QGG, 2 October 1926, CXXVII:87, pp1234-5 and 28 August 1937, CXLIX:55, p569 for building regulations relating to flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area.
In addition, from 1931 Brisbane City Council health inspectors undertook annual inspections of premises for which application had been made for a licence to conduct as a flat or tenement building. At the first inspection the maximum number of persons (usually one or two) allowable per bedroom was recorded. This would depend on the size of the room and whether it could hold a double or single bed. This record provided a registrable figure for the number of persons to be accommodated in a flat building without violating the licence. For example, a block of six flats, each containing one double and one single bedroom, would be licensed to accommodate a total of 18 persons, or three persons per flat. This was an effective tool for the Council in its efforts to prevent overcrowding in flats, but was not immune from circumvention by tenants.

Australian census data suggests that in 1933 Brisbane flats and tenements were no more crowded than private houses. While the average number of occupants per flat or tenement in 1933 was 2.79 persons compared with 4.15 persons per private house, in the average number of inmates per room the difference was slight: 0.85 occupants per room in a flat or tenement compared with 0.79 in a private house.\(^\text{85}\)

**Table 8.1** overleaf shows the average number of persons per flat or tenement in each census district within the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1933. The variation in averages was slight, ranging from 2.63 persons in the Nundah district to 3.52 in the Wynnum area. In the inner city census districts of Brisbane (City), Fortitude Valley, Kurilpa, Maree and Merthyr, which contained 67 per cent of Brisbane’s flats and tenements, the average number of occupants was 2.75.

Other documentary evidence, such as data derived from the Brisbane building approval registers 1926-1941 and newspaper reports, suggests that districts recording higher averages of persons per flat or tenement in the census data tended to be areas in which flats and tenements in converted houses predominated over purpose-built blocks. This impression correlates with contemporary community concerns that the greatest overcrowding in multiple-dwelling buildings was in the flats and tenements in converted houses rather than in the purpose-built blocks of flats.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Electoral District</th>
<th>Flats or Tenements</th>
<th>Percentage of total Brisbane Flats and Tenements</th>
<th>Average Number of Inmates</th>
<th>Average Number of Rooms</th>
<th>Average Number of Inmates per Room</th>
<th>Average Weekly Rent</th>
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<td>16/4</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
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<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Brisbane Average
2.79 3.3 0.85 18/6


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Figure 8.2 below, again based on 1933 census data, further illustrates that Brisbane flats and tenements tended to attract on average two or three occupants. Only 13.5 per cent of occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area were inhabited by one person, but the bulk, approximately 62 per cent, were occupied by two or three persons. Occupied flats and tenements with six or more occupants constituted under 4 per cent of the metropolitan total, suggesting that extreme overcrowding was the exception rather than the rule.

Fig. 8.287

Therefore in 1933, more Brisbane flat and tenement dwellers resided in the inner residential suburbs than elsewhere in the metropolitan area, and they were probably sharing their accommodation with one or two other persons.

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Economic realities

In addition to the noisy environment and the extremely compact nature of the flat, there could be economic disadvantages to flat-living which for many reinforced the attractions of rent-purchasing a detached house. As pointed out by a commentator weighing the pros and cons of flat-living against house-owning in 1925, the rent on a well-appointed modern flat could be more expensive than paying off the loan on an average house, and was expenditure with no accrued gain. The latter point was a powerful detraction to flat-living – there was no home-ownership, no asset gained, to show for the years of rent-paying.

Flat rentals varied, dependent on the nature and the quality of the premises, location, and demand. The earliest purpose-built flats in Brisbane attracted very high rents initially, when compared with the average rent of 14/- for a house, flat or tenement in the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1921. Stanley Flats at South Brisbane, for example, were renting at 50/- per week when completed in 1923:

These newly erected flats now ready occupation, quite up to-date, perfectly self-contained, front and back entrance, easy walking distance city, living and three bedrooms, kitchenette, bathroom, enamel bath, heater, septic system, gas copper, set tubs, large porch, electric light, gas stove, etc. Rent £2/10/-, unfurnished.

In 1933, prior to the flat building ‘boom’ of the mid- to late-1930s, the average weekly rent in metropolitan Brisbane for a flat or tenement was 18/6, although those in the Merthyr census district, which encompassed the popular flat district of New Farm with its modern purpose-built flats, averaged a little higher at 23/10 per week. These low averages reflected the existence of vast numbers of tenements and flats in converted houses throughout the city, which were cheaper to rent than flats in the better quality purpose-built blocks. Any perusal of daily ‘To Let’ columns in the local press reveals that the good-quality purpose-built flats were attracting much higher rentals.

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88 JC Dunlop in Australian Home Builder republished in ABJQ, 10 October 1925, p58; Sunday Mail, 27 September 1925, p14.
89 Census 4 April 1921 Vol.II, p1585.
90 Brisbane Courier, 21 April 1923, p14.
Chapter 8: Tabloid living

Conclusion

For example, in May 1934, Ray White, a prominent realtor, advertised a number of Brisbane’s finest flats for rent, unfurnished, ranging from 40/- to 70/- per week.\(^92\) It would be unusual, therefore, for anyone paying the average rent for a Brisbane flat in 1933, to be residing in a good-quality, purpose-built block.

Probably the most expensive of the interwar flats to rent were those in Craigston on Wickham Terrace, on the periphery of the central business district. Of a substantial size (most occupied the entire floor), the majority of these were owner-occupied by shareholders in Craigston Flats Ltd or let to their acquaintances, and rarely were they placed on the open market for letting. When one of these flats was advertised in late 1930, it was attracting a rent of nine guineas per week:

\[
\text{CRAIGSTON, Wickham-terrace, superior furnished flat, three bedrooms, maid's room, dining-room, drawing-room, kitchen, gas and electric stoves, refrigerator, two bathrooms, hot and cold water service throughout, lift service, garage, every modern convenience. Rental, £9/9/ per week. Further particulars, Cameron Bros.}^{93}\]

To place the rental of Craigston Flats in perspective, in 1933 just over 54 per cent of all Queensland breadwinners earned less than £104 per annum, or under £2 per week, and a further 23 per cent earned between £2 and under £4 per week. Only 20 per cent of Queensland breadwinners earned £4 or more per week.\(^94\)

**Conclusion**

Flat-living in the interwar period was all about ‘down-sizing’: smaller (or no) family, smaller premises, less (or no) assistance from domestic servants, less furniture, less housework and less maintenance. As compensation for the compact nature of flats and lack of domestic assistance, flat-dwellers gained the latest in domestic services, appliances, and reputedly, greater leisure time. What this produced was a different perception of domesticity to the suburban ideal of life with a family, house and garden.

\(^92\) ‘At Bowen Hills: Allistan, 45/ to 50/. At New Farm: Glenster Court, 57/6; Winbourne, 40/; Foxthorne, 50/; Coronet, 45/ to 70/; Capri, 50/; Elystan Court, 52/6’ (Courier-Mail, 12 May 1934, p3).
\(^93\) Brisbane Courier, 22 November 1930, p3.
\(^94\) Census 30 June 1933, Bulletin No.11, p11.
By the 1930s the community accepted that some people in Brisbane preferred the modern flat to the suburban idyll, but there remained an underlying unease with a lifestyle that did not cater overtly to family life. Although flat-living acquired a legitimate place within Brisbane society during the interwar years, and it was accepted that some people thought of the flat they occupied as home rather than a temporary place of residence, there remained some ambivalence toward living in flats, reflecting deeply entrenched social and cultural prejudices toward compact living.

Although the proportion of Brisbane people who resided in flats and tenements was small, and of those who resided in modern purpose-built flats even smaller, the lifestyle they led meant that they formed a distinctive social group. They were not societal fringe-dwellers by any means, but by living in flats they were considered to have rejected in some measure the suburban lifestyle that predominated in Brisbane at this period. The dichotomy inherent in the nature of modernity was manifest: to contemporaries, flat-living was both an aberration from the suburban norm and the epitome of what it meant to be 'modern'.

Flats both reflected and facilitated the early-twentieth-century democratisation of modernity. Living in flats in the interwar years was associated with modern career-and-entertainment-focussed lifestyles, and the provision of new, purpose-designed flats on a significant scale seemingly offered this style of living to a wider section of the community than had been possible when modernity was an exclusive pursuit of the middle classes in large suburban villas. Flat-dwelling had became an expression of Australian middle-class ‘dreaming’ to which less affluent classes might also aspire.

The reality was different, of course. A glamorous lifestyle in modern, up-to-date premises eluded the majority of tenement and flat-dwellers in interwar Brisbane. On the other hand, life in a small flat, however inconveniently arranged and noisy, did provide occupants with more time free of household duties, which could be spent, guilt-free, on personal fulfilment. In addition, living in flats of all kinds offered to women new lifestyle dimensions, freedoms and independence, and, whether warranted or not, the occupants of the more modern flats were perceived as ‘cosmopolitans’.
Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
As discussed in **Chapter 8**, there existed certain contemporary pre-conceptions about interwar flat-dwellers – that in some fashion flats freed their occupants from the domesticity and responsibilities inherent in suburban-living in detached family homes. But what was the ‘demographic’ of Brisbane’s interwar flat-dwellers? In 1933 a total of 10,542 persons or 3.52 per cent of the Brisbane population resided in flats and tenements.\(^1\) Were they a young, single, cosmopolitan clique, or did they display demographic characteristics similar to the inhabitants of the new outer suburbs?

This chapter profiles the types of people most closely associated with Brisbane’s interwar flat buildings – those who owned and leased them, and those who occupied them. The analysis relies heavily on a combination of demographic and dwellings data from the 1933 Australian census, which fell close to the middle of the study period, to profile persons who were householders\(^2\) of a Brisbane flat or tenement, according to the mode of occupancy, gender, age, marital status and grade of occupation.

Given that profiling the owners and occupants of Brisbane’s interwar flat buildings through census data can be at best indicative, documentary evidence is also employed, providing a valuable qualifier to the quantitative data relied on in the first section of this chapter.

The census data relating to householders of flats and tenements is based on the mode of occupancy (owner-occupier, rent-purchaser or tenant). In 1933, 83.25 per cent of occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area were occupied by rent-paying tenants. A mere 1.93 per cent were occupied by rent-purchasers and only 8.43 per cent were owner-occupied\(^3\), reflecting the lack of strata title legislation available in Queensland at this period.\(^4\) As very few flat developments in Brisbane in 1933 were held as co-operatives, most of the owner-occupiers would have owned the entire building in which their flat was situated.

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\(^1\) Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2061.

\(^2\) The term 'householder' should not be confused with 'property owner'.

\(^3\) Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2068.

A further 6.39 per cent were occupied by neither owner, rent-purchaser, nor rent-paying tenant – this would have included persons residing in trust-owned or family-owned flats or accommodated free of rent.

\(^4\) Strata title was not available in Queensland until the commencement of the *Building Units Titles Act 1965* (Gary F. Bugden, *Unit and group titles: management practice in Queensland*, North Ryde, NSW: CCH Australia, 1981, p2.)
Owner-occupiers

Of the 319 householders who owned the flat or tenement they were occupying in Brisbane in 1933, 58.31 per cent were males and 41.69 per cent were females. Given the social conventions of the era and the nature of the census data collected, most female householders were probably either widowed, separated, divorced or never married, as it would have been unusual for a wife to be listed on the census return as the head of the household if her husband was occupying the same premises.

Census data relating to the age of householders was produced for the whole of Queensland, and not for Brisbane alone. However, Queensland wide, owner-occupiers of flats or tenements tended to be middle-aged or older. As Figure 9.1 below illustrates, in only 11 per cent of owner-occupied flats or tenements was the principal householder aged under 40 years. In the majority (approximately 68 per cent) the householder was in their forties, fifties and sixties.

Fig. 9.1

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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 279
In terms of marital status, in just over 54 per cent of owner-occupied flats and tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area the principal householder was married, and in close to 26 per cent widowed. In about 19 per cent the householder had never married, and in a tiny 1.25 per cent, was divorced.\textsuperscript{7}

As illustrated in Figure 9.2 below, it was found that in just over 51 per cent of owner-occupied flats or tenements in the Brisbane metropolitan area the principal householder was in full employment (either as an employer, self-employed, or full-time wage or salary earner). Interestingly, in close to 40 per cent, the principal householder did not derive a principal income from an occupation, which would correlate with an older age-group retired, or widowed and not in the workforce.

Fig. 9.2\textsuperscript{8}

In conclusion, the average owner-occupier of a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933 was likely to be male, middle-aged (in their forties or fifties) or older (applying the Queensland-wide trend to the Brisbane metropolitan area), probably either married or widowed, and was more likely not to derive a principal income from an occupation, or to be self-employed or an employer, than to be a full-time or part-time wage or salary earner. Further, the data supports contemporary impressions that widowed persons, especially women, were attracted to the flat lifestyle. It also reveals that over 40 per cent of flat or tenement householders who were owner-occupiers, were women.

\textsuperscript{7} Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2264.
\textsuperscript{8} Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2274.
Rent-purchasers (Purchasers by Instalments)

The 73 Brisbane householders who were purchasing a flat or tenement by instalments in 1933 virtually replicated the gender distribution of owner-occupiers, with 58.9 per cent being male and 41.1 per cent female.\footnote{Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2264.}

\textbf{Figure 9.3} below illustrates that Queensland-wide, rent-purchasers of a flat or tenement tended to be younger than those who were owner-occupiers. The percentage of flats and tenements in which the principal householder was aged under 40 years was double that of owner-occupiers (at 22 per cent), while in the majority (approximately 61 per cent) the principal householder was in their forties or fifties. These statistics are to be expected, with rent-purchasers becoming owner-occupiers over time.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig9.3.png}
\caption{Queensland: Percentage of Rent-Purchaser-occupied Flats and Tenements according to Age of Householder, as at 30 June 1933.}
\end{figure}

In terms of marital status, in approximately 63 per cent of Brisbane flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchasers, the principal householder was married, compared with 54 per cent of owner-occupied flats and tenements. Proportionally the two modes of occupancy were similar for householders who were widowed (24.66 per cent of flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchaser) and divorced (1.37 per cent). However, there was a significant variation in the number of flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchasers in which the principal householder had never married – approximately 11 per cent compared with about 19 per cent of owner-occupied flats and tenements.\footnote{Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2269.}

\footnote{Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2264.}
Figure 9.4 below illustrates that in close to 66 per cent of Brisbane flats or tenements occupied by rent-purchasers, the principal householder was fully employed (either as an employer, self-employed, or full-time wage or salary earner) – compared with 51 per cent of owner-occupied flats and tenements. Further, the number in which the principal householder did not derive a principal income from an occupation was about half that of owner-occupied flats and tenements – as may be expected of a younger age group.

In conclusion, the average householder who was a rent-purchaser of a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933 was, like the owner-occupiers, more likely to be male than female, but, if the Queensland-wide trend is any indication, was probably younger, more likely to be married and to be either self-employed or a full-time wage or salary earner.
Rent-paying tenants

Tenants who were principal householders of a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933 displayed markedly different demographic characteristics to those of owner-occupiers and rent-purchasers. To begin with, in approximately three-quarters (73.56 per cent) of tenanted Brisbane flats and tenements the principal householder was male, compared with a ratio of approximately 60 per cent male to 40 per cent female for the other two modes of occupancy.\(^\text{13}\)

They were also a much younger group. As illustrated in Figure 9.5 below, Queensland-wide, in approximately 53 per cent of tenanted flats and tenements the principal householder was aged under 40 years, which differed significantly from the 11 per cent of owner-occupied flats and tenements and the 22 per cent of those occupied by rent-purchasers. With a further 20 per cent of flats and tenements in which the principal householder was aged in his or her forties, approximately 73 per cent of tenanted flats and tenements recorded a principal householder aged under 50 years.

Fig. 9.5\(^\text{14}\)

In terms of marital status, substantially more Brisbane flats and tenements recorded a principal householder who was married (73.44 per cent), than either of the other modes of occupancy, dispelling any illusion that the majority of householders who rented flats were 'singles'. In approximately 12 per cent the principal householder was widowed, in just over 13 per cent had never married, and in just over 1 per cent was divorced.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2264.  
\(^{15}\) Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2264.
With regard to occupation, Figure 9.6 below illustrates that, as in flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchasers, in approximately 35 per cent of tenanted flats and tenements the principal householder was a full-time wage or salary earner, and in approximately 20 per cent did not derive a principal income from an occupation. However, in just under 49 per cent the principal householder was in full-employment (either as an employer, self-employed, or full-time wage or salary earner), compared with nearly 75 per cent in flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchasers. The nearly 15 per cent with a householder who was a part-time wage and salary earner was more than 3.5 times higher than in flats and tenements occupied by rent-purchasers, and in a considerable proportion of tenanted flats and tenements the principal householder was unemployed - 13.17 per cent compared with 9.59 per cent of rent-purchaser flats and tenements and 4.39 per cent of owner-occupied.

In conclusion, rent-paying tenants who were householders of a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933 had a 73 per cent chance of being male and married, a 53 per cent chance of being aged under 40 and a 73 per cent chance of being aged under 50 (extrapolating from the Queensland-wide statistics). They were also more likely to be unemployed or part-time wage or salary earners than either owner-occupiers or rent-purchasers.

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Children in flats

Contemporary observations that, due to its compact nature, flat-living did not attract large families, appears to be substantiated in the 1933 census data. While the data specific to dependent children (defined as under 16 years of age) residing in flats and tenements is limited to the Queensland context, the findings are indicative of a strong trend against large numbers of children residing in multiple-dwelling buildings. In just over 57 per cent of occupied flats and tenements in the State there was no child resident, compared with approximately 46 per cent of occupied private dwellings.17

Just under 36 per cent of flats and tenements in the State accommodated one or two children, and in just under five per cent there were three. Interestingly, a slightly lower percentage of private houses (approximately 34 per cent) than flats and tenements accommodated one or two children, although the number of private houses with households of this size was far greater. In particular, 23.25 per cent of flats and tenements accommodated one child compared with 18.5 per cent of private houses. However, the percentage of private houses accommodating three children (just under 10 per cent) was almost double that of flats and tenements.

The proportion of flats and tenements with more than three children was miniscule, with just over 2 per cent accommodating between four and seven children – numerically, 151 flats and tenements out of a State total of 6,410. In no Queensland flat or tenement did the number of dependent children exceed seven. In private houses, just over 10 per cent accommodated between four and seven children, and about one per cent had over seven children. These statistics were also a clear indication that the era of very large families was drawing to an end.

The percentages cited above suggest that while only a very small proportion of Queensland children resided in flats and tenements in 1933, well over one-third of occupied flats and tenements accommodated households with one or two children. Unfortunately, the ages of these children are not supplied, but it is likely that they were quite young. Given that in 73 per cent of tenanted flats and tenements, householders were married men, and in 53 per cent, the householder was aged under 40 years, the possibility of flats and tenements attracting young families is highly feasible.

Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners

Children in flats

From a perusal of interwar newspapers, it is clear that young families did reside in Brisbane flats. Advertisements for nursemaids or young girls to mind children in a residential flat were not uncommon at this period.\(^{18}\) Consider the example of Mr and Mrs Arthur H. Shmith of fashionable Hampton Court Flats on Bowen Terrace at New Farm.\(^{19}\) Mrs Shmith gave birth to a daughter in January 1929, and by late September that year, when she advertised for domestic help – a ‘smart young girl for married couple, with one child, all duties’ – she and her husband had taken a flat at Hampton Court.\(^{20}\) Nor were children in flats restricted to the purpose-built blocks, as illustrated in this social snippet from the local press in January 1920:

Dr and Mrs Frank Howson and children are staying at Southport. They have taken a flat at Palmarosa from early in February.\(^{21}\)

On the other hand, many flat owners were noted for discriminating against children residing in flats, usually on the grounds of noise and nuisance to other tenants, or concerns about damage to property in furnished flats. For example, when a flat in Langshaw House, New Farm, was advertised for rent in February 1928, ‘no children’ was clearly specified.\(^{22}\)

As discussed in Chapter 8, flats were considered by many in the community to be inappropriate places in which to raise children beyond infancy. This was particularly evident in the early years of flat-living in Brisbane, as illustrated in this *Daily Mail* interview with a ‘well-known real estate agent’:

There was a particular trait in the character of the Queenslander, he observed. He or she had a very great regard for the welfare of the children, and children as a rule loved the open spaces and the ‘fling about the house’. They revelled in the backyard playground. The flat kept them confined unless one was fortunate enough to have a public park or recreation reserve handy.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{18}\) For example: ‘YOUNG girl wanted to mind walking child. Apply Guildford Court, Wickham-terrace, near City View Hotel’ (*Brisbane Courier*, 4 September 1923, p16) and ‘REFINED maid fond of children, required for small flat, New Farm, “Frankston,” Upper Moray-street’ (*Brisbane Courier*, 16 January 1925, p9).

\(^{19}\) When completed in January 1928, Hampton Court was advertised as ‘the most modern and up-to-date unfurnished flats in Brisbane ... Every convenience and fine views.’ (*Brisbane Courier*, 30 January 1928, p22.)

\(^{20}\) *Brisbane Courier*, 27 September 1929, p11.

\(^{21}\) *Brisbane Courier*, 13 January 1920, p9.


\(^{23}\) *Daily Mail*, 30 December 1924, p10.
This attitude was sustained throughout the interwar years. Interviewed in Brisbane in May 1936, Mr J.A. Burke, a director of the Melbourne house-and-land developer T.M. Burke Pty Ltd and an advocate for more detached housing in preference to flats (not surprisingly), stated: ‘An important objection was that flat dwellers often had only the street as a playground. Families with young children were not considered desirable tenants in flats …’24

When in 1939 the Labor-dominated Brisbane City Council sought approval from the State government to amend its ordinances to permit two-storeyed timber buildings to be converted into flats or tenements, all the old arguments about fear of slum creation and inappropriateness of children in flats were resurrected by opposition councillors:

Alderman Powell added that the conversion of such houses on small areas of land would force land values up so much that working people would be unable to buy land, and would have to live in tenements. It would herd people together, foster birth control, and lead to poorly reared children.25

However, the growing popularity of maisonettes (a pair of houses sharing a party wall) in the second half of the 1930s, a trend which was supported by the City Planner, Mr RA McInnis, may have enticed more families into this form of multiple-dwelling building than the more typical block of four to six flats or converted residence. As the Courier-Mail noted in December 1940:

The average block of city flats has little ground space. That is among the reasons why people with children are discouraged from settling in them. Maisonettes, on the other hand, usually have back yards, and if the tenants are sufficiently industrious, gardens. Children are able to obtain sunlight, air, and playing room.26

Unfortunately, there is no statistical data available to establish the number of children resident in maisonettes at any time during the study period.

24 Courier-Mail, 26 May 1936, p23.
26 ‘Maisonettes in the Nearer Suburbs’ in Courier-Mail, 10 December 1940, p16.
Women and the business of flats

As was noted in Chapter 8, the marketing of new flats to prospective tenants was targeted primarily at women, with promises of a convenient and glamorous lifestyle. It would seem, however, that some women played a more pro-active role in the interwar ‘flat fashion’ than as the focus of male-directed marketing strategies.

The census data cited above indicates that in over 40 per cent of owner-occupied Brisbane flats and tenements, the principal householder was a woman. A similar percentage was found among rent-purchasers. It would appear then that these women held a pecuniary interest in the property in some form.

Beyond the census data there is other evidence to suggest that women considered flat buildings to be attractive as investments in which they might participate, either as owners or lessees, and whether or not they resided in them. While some women worked with their husbands in developing flats as family investments, there is evidence to suggest that others initiated flat developments and investments in their own right.

As was noted and exemplified in Chapter 3, women were closely associated with the conversion of houses into flats and tenements, which may be considered a pragmatic progression from women’s earlier and strong association with the boarding and lodging house industry in Brisbane. In the nineteenth century, many women faced with having to earn an income had survived financially by turning the family home into a boarding or lodging house, or taking the lease of a building to conduct it for this purpose. In effect they were extending the traditional female realm (the home) into the business world. Brisbane postal directories for the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century reveal inner-suburban streets full of boarding houses run by women, and from the early 1900s the grand suburban homes of Brisbane’s nineteenth-century elite were being leased to women who were conducting them as boarding, lodging and guest houses, private hotels, and nursing and convalescence homes.27

27 In her articles on the history of Brisbane’s early residences, published in the Queenslander in the early 1930s, FE Lord drew attention (perhaps unconsciously) to the strong association of women with boarding houses and with residences converted into flats. Some women were particularly astute in their business dealings. For example, according to Miss Lord, Robert Little’s former home Whytecliffe, a large, two-storeyed, mid-1870s mansion at Albion, had been converted into a boarding house about 1906, on lease to Mrs Rosendorff, who subsequently purchased the property and sold much of the surrounding land for suburban residential development (Lord in Queenslander, 11 September 1930, p7; Watson and McKay 1994, p170). Again, Sidney House, on the riverbank at Toowong (a fine, two-
‘Residentials’ (boarding houses, guest houses and private hotels) continued to prove popular during the interwar period with women owners and lessees, who appeared to be making good incomes from these establishments. This form of residential accommodation was meeting a growing demand from city workers, travellers and visitors, with the result that many new purpose-built boarding houses, guest houses and private hotels appeared in inner-suburban/inner-city Brisbane at this period.\(^{28}\) The majority were run by women lessees, and a number were commissioned by women.\(^{29}\)

By the 1920s, however, there was a growing trend for converting houses into tenements or self-contained flats rather than boarding houses, especially in an era in which domestic assistance was difficult to attract and expensive to retain. Most residentials provided breakfast, possibly other meals, and in some establishments, room service; unless it was a very small concern operated by family members, this required the employment of domestic staff. Shifting to tenements, in which bathrooms, water closets and sometimes even kitchens were shared, required comparatively little expense and reduced the need for staff.

\(^{28}\) ‘Residentials’ ranged from modest inner-suburban developments to large inner-city undertakings such as Atcherley House (private hotel, 1927, Queen and Adelaide streets); the temperance movement’s Hotel Canberra (private hotel, 1929, Edward and Ann streets); and the Anglican Church’s Eton Private Hotel (1930, Wharf and Adelaide Streets).

\(^{29}\) For example, Brunswick House at the corner of Brunswick and Martin Streets in Fortitude Valley, was erected in 1927 at a cost of approximately £6,000 for Mrs E.M. Gayler. It was a large, three-storeyed, brick and fibrous-cement building, with a corner-front café and manager’s flat on the ground floor, and a total of 34 bedrooms on the floors above. Mrs Gayler installed a manageress to conduct the premises as a private hotel (no liquor license), with board optional (BCC, building approval no.10,614 (23 December 1926); Brisbane Courier, 30 August 1927, p22, 1 September 1927, p11; 15 September 1927, p21, 17 November 1927, p8; Phillips Smith Conwell Architects Archive, Job no.770, Tube 4, Roll 11). Again, Shandon, a two-storeyed brick residential in Upper Edward Street designed by Chambers and Ford, was erected in 1929 for Annie Mulvihill at a cost of £2,000. It contained 18 bedrooms and was managed by Mrs Ann Gibbs, who offered ‘board and residence’ (BCC, building approval no.18,329 (4 March 1929); Brisbane Courier, 1 June 1929, p5, 16 July 1929, p2). Then there was May Salmon, who, in partnership with builder D.E. Wheeldon, erected a number of speculative properties during the interwar period, including two substantial residentials in Spring Hill in 1929: Yulite (cnr Leichhardt and Birley streets, £4,200) and the Astor Private Hotel (Astor Terrace (Herbert Street), £6,000) (BCC, building approvals nos 18263 (25 February 1929) and 18937 (28 May 1929)).
Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
Women and the business of flats

The decision to convert to self-contained flats was a more expensive undertaking, as these required the installation of additional kitchens, bathrooms and water closets to satisfy licensing requirements. However, for some women, converting a house into flats enabled them, as owners, to earn an income and at the same time retain and occupy the family home. Florence Lord, in her articles for the Queenslander on early Brisbane residences, always found a polite manner in which to account for the conversion of a family home into flats. For example:

Finding the Hill End home, Kirriemuir, too large now for her family’s requirements, Mrs Birchley has formed a flat at the northern and southern ends of it, and built a new kitchen on the back veranda at the back. The old kitchen premises have been absorbed by one of the flats.30

Many other women purchased or leased properties suitable for conversion to flats, or took on premises already converted, as business enterprises. Miss Lord provides the example of Mrs F.M. Turbayne, a widow, who in the 1920s purchased an old Hamilton home called The Nook (originally Blainsleigh), situated on about two and a half acres. According to Miss Lord, Mrs Turbayne proceeded to sell two-thirds of the land for residential development and to convert the house into Windermere Flats.31

During the interwar years the leasing of buildings to conduct as flats, tenements, or boarding houses became an extremely popular economic activity amongst women, but by no means was exclusive to them. Adverts for the sale of these leases were common by the 1930s, and with so much competition, the business rather than the property often became the asset. Women were achieving notable success in the sale of business ‘goodwill’ in these enterprises – business activities considered ‘suited for feminine enterprise’ – as noted by the Courier-Mail in September 1937:

Women with a little capital at their disposal are regarding flat leases not only as a means of earning an income and of obtaining a home for themselves, but as avenues for making profit through the development of business goodwill. Women possessing a keen business instinct have also demonstrated that it is possible to make a comfortable income through taking the lease of boarding-houses and improving the goodwill. Real estate, in fact, becomes to them merely a background to personal endeavour.32

30 Lord in Queenslander, 6 October 1932, p34.
31 Lord in Queenslander, 25 February 1932, p35
32 ‘Women In Real Estate’ in Courier-Mail, 21 September 1937, p22.
While women were associated closely with the ownership or lease of flats in converted houses, they also took a noticeable lead in the ownership and commissioning of purpose-designed blocks of flats and maisonettes.

Of particular note was the strong involvement of women in the earliest phase of purpose-built flat construction in Brisbane. Most of these developments were solely for investment purposes (that is, the owner/s did not intend to reside in them). Of the 15 identified purpose-built flat developments in the Brisbane metropolitan area constructed between January 1921 and December 1925, including three buildings in which residential flats were combined with commercial spaces, seven were erected for female owners (refer to Table 9.1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>year completed</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simla Flats</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Mrs Ada May Richards, wife of Arthur Edward Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York House</td>
<td>Bowen Hills</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Mrs Knight, (wife? mother?) of Joseph Herbert Knight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KD Flats (soon Evansleigh Flats)</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Mrs Fanny Bennett, wife of Harry Bennett and trustee for Isabel Marian Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morella, Carinyah, Lumtah, and Neerim (also known as Kilroe’s Flats and later Victoria Flats)</td>
<td>Spring Hill</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Mrs Frances (Fanny) Kilroe, wife of Joseph Kilroe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkestone Flats</td>
<td>Bowen Hills</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Miss Julia Ophelia Chilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia-ora</td>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Mrs Scott</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott House</td>
<td>Kangaroo Point</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Mrs Zina Cumbrae-Stewart, wife of Professor Cumbrae-Stewart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whether the women identified above were undertaking these developments in their own right, or as family investments, or fronting for their husbands’ business activities, is not revealed in the public documents. Women’s involvement not only in ‘flat’ real estate but in the property market in general is difficult to assess, given that historically men had found it convenient, for business purposes (and later for personal income taxation reasons), to place title to property in the name of a female relative – usually a wife, daughter or sister. This was particularly true of the family home, which in this manner was protected should a man file for bankruptcy in his business.

33 Information derived from BCC, City Architect’s Department, Registers of Building Approvals, 1904-1941; BCC, Health Department, Licensing files – Multiple-Dwellings; and notices in contemporary newspapers.
Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
Women and the business of flats

For example, the first identified block of purpose-built flats in Brisbane (Simla Flats, 1921) was erected for Mrs Ada May Richards adjacent to her home Mimosa in Balfour Street, New Farm, where she resided with her husband, Arthur Edward Richards. Mr Richards had acquired the Mimosa allotments in 1908 but transferred title to his wife in 1912. The site for the flats next door was acquired in 1910 in Mrs Richards' name, and she was listed as the applicant for Council approval of the flat development in February 1921. After the construction of Simla, Mrs Richards and her husband continued to reside at Mimosa until his death in January 1927, after which she moved into a flat in Simla and advertised her former home for sale. It is highly likely that the flat development was a family investment.

Similarly, in the public record Mrs Fanny Kilroe appears to have been responsible for commissioning architect T.B.M. Wightman to design a block of four flats erected in 1922-1923 in the grounds of Mirrunya on Gregory Terrace – the family home she shared with her husband Joseph Kilroe, a manager-director with, and shareholder in, Finney, Isles and Co. Title to the whole of the property (Mirrunya and the flats) had been held in Mrs Kilroe’s name since 1918, about the time the house was constructed and the family moved to Gregory Terrace. That the flats were associated with Mrs Kilroe and not her husband is indicated in the following 1923 news item: ‘Mr and Mrs Frank Bowcher have leased Morilla, Gregory-terrace, one of Mrs Kilroe’s new flats, and will take up their residence there early next week.’ However, the project may well have been a family investment. Joseph Kilroe was an extremely successful businessman, and it is highly probable that he financed the construction of the flats on Gregory Terrace.

34 DERM, title documents 10323193, 11136166, 11093218; BCC building approval no. 4091 (16 February 1921); Brisbane Courier, 18 January 1927, p9; Daily Mail, 7 February 1928, p3.
35 ABJO, 7 June 1923, p38; BCC, building approval no.4591 (16 November 1922); Brisbane Courier, 9 August 1923, p23; QHR, ‘Victoria Flats’ (601888); DERM, title documents 10016045, 11403155, 11479118; QPOD, 1919/20 – 1940.
36 Joseph Kilroe had worked his way through the firm of Finney Isles & Co. from shop assistant in the mid-1880s to partner in 1898. Following the reconfiguration of the firm as a limited liability company in 1905, he became co-managing-director, which position he held until his retirement in February 1930. In the 1920s he purchased Northam, an historic house in Bardon, and an additional 8 acres of land adjacent to the house, on which he hoped to conserve the indigenous forest. Interestingly, he converted the two-storeyed residence into three flats (Brisbane Courier, 4 July 1930, p17). See also Lord in Queenslander, 14 May 1931, p46.
Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
Women and the business of flats

Miss Julia Ophelia Chilton of Clay Street, New Farm, on the other hand, appears to have been acting on her own initiative with the construction of Wilkestone Flats on Breakfast Creek Road at Bowen Hills, built by contractor J.H. Knight for her in 1924. However, there may have been a financial connection with Knight, who in 1922 had erected another block of flats, York House, nearby on Breakfast Creek Road, for 'Mrs Knight'. J.H. Knight was resident at York House at the time of construction of Wilkestone Flats. In 1926 he constructed for M.E. Knight a pair of small brick maisonettes (Malanda) in Clay Street at New Farm, on what was formerly Miss Chilton's property (or part of), and by 1927 Miss Chilton had occupied one of her Wilkestone Flats.37

Some indication that women were being attracted to the Brisbane property market in their own right early in the interwar years appeared in an article in the local Sunday Mail toward the end of 1924:

Leading agents state that a notable feature of to-day is the every-increasing number of women who are gradually becoming home-owners. 'A girl with her head screwed on the right way,' said one salesman, 'can do very well almost from the moment that she starts to earn a salary. After all, the deposits on blocks are often such trifling sums, and the regular weekly or monthly payments so easy, that the economical young woman has every encouragement to go in for the venture. Now and again it happens, too, that there is a chance to sell out at a profit, and to get into something better or more desirable — in the case of the fair sex I have noticed that 'more desirable' counts for a whole lot.'38

Constructing a block of flats may not have been quite as simple for women as acquiring a house-and-land package in the new suburbs. A flat building, especially if it was a good quality brick structure, cost more to erect than a detached suburban house. Furthermore, a good location in an inner city suburb was essential, and hence the cost of the land and rates would be significantly higher.

For some women, flat developments were more attractive as investments if the land was already owned — as in the situations of Mrs Richards and Mrs Kilroe cited above, who were utilising land adjacent to the family home.

37 BCC, building approval nos. 5240 (30 May 1924) and 7038 (17 February 1926); QSA SRS4152-1-23: BCC, Health Committee Reports 16/8/1923-23/7/1925, p78; Brisbane Courier, 21 June 1924, p3; Daily Mail, 23 September 1924. p14; QPOD, 1924/25-1940.
38 Sunday Mail, 28 December 1924, p13.
Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
Women and the business of flats

During the flat building boom of the 1930s, when flat-living had become acceptable and fashionable, and the weekly real estate columns in the local press were filled with encouraging reports of flat investments returning excellent profits, women from all walks of life took the opportunity to invest for themselves in new flat construction. Consider the example of Miss May Louise Terkelsen, a millinery buyer for the Brisbane department store of Allan and Stark. Miss Terkelsen was in her mid-thirties when she acquired a site at the corner of Barker Street and Gilbey Lane in New Farm, and commissioned the design and construction of a two-storeyed brick block of eight flats (Mt Pleasant), completed in 1936. So successful did they prove, that in 1937 she commissioned an additional block of four, which was erected at the rear of the site.39

One of the more extraordinary of Brisbane’s female flat developers was Mrs Doris Regina Booth,40 OBE, trader and goldminer of New Guinea, for whom Cliffside Flats at Kangaroo Point was constructed in 1936-1937. Designed by R. Martin Wilson, a prominent Brisbane architect of the interwar years; situated on Lower River Terrace in a prime location overlooking the central business district of Brisbane; and erected at a cost of around £10,000; Cliffside was one of Brisbane’s most expensive interwar flat developments and a highly desirable address. The site, located adjacent to Mrs Booth’s former childhood home, was acquired especially for the purpose.41

39 ABJO, 1 September 1937, p23; BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1937-1938, p531 (1213/1937-38); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (7)/314/38/54-PM090/66; Courier-Mail, 2 May 1936, p1, 27 January 1938, p20; DERM, title document 10322016.

40 Mrs Booth was born in Brisbane in 1895 and spent her childhood at Kangaroo Point. She became well-known because of her exploits in New Guinea, where she had moved in 1920 after her marriage to Captain Charles Booth in 1919. There, independent of her husband, she secured shares in four trading stores, became a licensed recruiter of labour, and acquired her own miner’s right. In 1924 she was the only white woman in the Bulolo Valley (soon the scene of a gold rush), and resided there alone for much of the time while her husband was prospecting. From September 1926 to January 1927 she organized and managed a bush hospital to control a dysentery epidemic, receiving an O.B.E for this work in 1928. In London that year she recorded her adventures in Mountains, Gold and Cannibals, written with the assistance of M. O’Dwyer. On her return to New Guinea in 1929 she gradually assumed control of business affairs from her husband, whom she left in 1932. In 1933 Charles Booth sued in the Central Court of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea for restitution of property. The matter proved to be a test case in the protection of married women’s property rights. The judgement found in favour of Mrs Booth and was upheld in a subsequent appeal in the High Court. Consequently, territorial law was amended by the Status of Married Women Ordinance 1935-36. Mrs Booth settled in Brisbane in 1938 but also become a successful mine manager and company director in New Guinea, and was appointed as the sole woman member of the first and second Legislative Councils of Papua New Guinea in 1951-1957. She retired to Brisbane in 1960 and sold Cliffside Flats in 1966 (Susan Gardner, ‘Booth, Doris Regina (1895 - 1970)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.7, Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp 343-4).

41 BCC, building approval no. 32,004 (9 June 1936); Courier-Mail, 16 June 1936, p5, 13 July 1937, p18; Telegraph, 29 June 1937, p16.
The builder-owners

New flat developments also attracted the interest of local builders, who began to erect flats on their own account – both as speculative projects intended for a quick re-sale, and as perpetual investments for which they were the property owner and landlord. In these activities some builders were joined by their wives and other family members.

A number of builder-owners concentrated on the upper end of the flat market. Harry Crouch, for example, ‘a recent arrival from New Zealand’, erected Ravenswood Flats (1930) and Glenster Court (1933-1934) at New Farm on land acquired for the purpose. Both were well-designed and well-finished blocks, intended to attract more affluent tenants. Ravenswood, Mr Crouch’s first investment in Brisbane flats, was promoted as being ‘planned on a scale which, though fairly common in the South, is comparatively new to Brisbane’. JP Donoghue, a Brisbane architect, was the designer. 42

Both blocks were erected as speculative developments, to be sold at the earliest opportunity. Glenster Court, for example, was completed in April 1934 and title was transferred to Mr T.J. Hayes in December the same year. Ravenswood, on the other hand, completed by October 1930 during the economic depression, was retained by Crouch (he and his wife resided in one of the flats) until the economic climate improved in 1933. 43

In 1935 Harry Crouch also took over a failed flat project in Grey Street, South Brisbane, close to the approach to the Grey Street Bridge. A flat building which had been commenced here in the early 1920s had not proceeded and the site had lain behind hoardings for about a dozen years. Crouch re-developed the site as Raven Court, a two-storeyed block of twelve flats designed by Chambers and Ford, a well-respected firm of Brisbane architects. 44

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42 ABJQ, 10 March 1930, p38.
43 BCC, building approval nos. 21,046 (15 March 1930) and 25,599 (27 July 1933); BCC, Health Department, files BCA1800 (8)314/38/54-PM120/319 and BCA1800 (0)314/38/54-PM670/40; BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1933-1934, p11 (790/1933); Brisbane Courier, 14 October 1930, p3, 31 May 1932, p12, 16 July 1932, p22; DERM, title documents 11268017, 11811145, 11844033, 11844034, 11897092; QPOD, 1931-1932.
44 ABJQ, 10 May 1935, p6; Brisbane Courier, 2 December 1924, p9; Courier-Mail, 12 March 1935, p9; 3 October 1936, p5, 11 March 1938, p9S; QPOD, 1939.
Chapter 9: Profiling flat-dwellers and flat-owners
The builder-owners

G.E. Day and Sons, a family building firm, constructed a number of new interwar flat buildings in Brisbane as investments, but the pinnacle of their achievements arguably was the construction of Elystan Court at New Farm, erected for G.H. Day (George Day jnr) in 1932-1933. The three-storeyed block with its impressive 'Tudor England' facade, was designed by T.R. Hall and L.B. Phillips, who conducted one of Brisbane’s most prominent and successful interwar architectural practices. Considered one of the finest buildings of its type, the block contained six comfortably-sized, well-appointed flats and a smaller caretaker’s flat at the rear on the ground floor. It is understood that George Day disposed of the flats within a year of their completion.45

Similarly, the building firm of C.T. Hall & Son (Charles Thomas Hall and Reginald Llewellyn Henry Hall), having acquired land in Moray Street, New Farm from Harry Crouch, erected Casa del Mar Flats in 1933-1934 as a family investment. Designed by George Rae, the architect of a number of very fine interwar flat buildings in Brisbane, the three-storeyed block of brick flats with a caretaker’s residence in the attic, represented a substantial investment of about £6,000. The family retained title to the property until early in 1941.46

One of the more prolific of the builder-owners was Fred Havill, who, in association with his wife Ethel, constructed a least five blocks of flats between 1932 and 1936, as family investments. All were located in New Farm, the principal ‘flat’ district in Brisbane between the wars, and each was designed by the architectural firm of Chambers and Ford. Havill targeted the first three blocks – Ardmore (1932, £1,500), Acton (1933, £2,000) and Ainslie (1934, £1,800) – at middle-income tenants. All were substantial two-storeyed brick structures, but not expensively detailed. A two-bedroom flat in Ardmore, for example, was renting at 32/6 per week in October 1933.47

45 ABJQ, 10 October 1932, p6; BCC, building approval no.24,249 (16 September 1932); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (8)314/38/54-PM240/38; Brisbane Courier, 29 Oct 1932, p8, 4 March 1933, p3, 11 March 1933, p4, 24 May 1933, p1; Phillips Smith Conwell Architects Archive, Job no. 1025, Tube 11 Roll 2 and Tube 68 Roll 1.
46 ABJQ, 10 February 1934, p12; BCC, building approval no. 26,185 (1 December 1933); Building, 12 October 1934, p17; Courier-Mail, 25 March 1936, p20; DERM, title document 11811146; Telegraph, 16 January 1934, p23.
47 BCC, building approvals nos 24,085 (9 August 1932), 24,979 (7 March 1933) and 26,554 (2 March 1934); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (0)314/38/54-PM400/10; Brisbane Courier, 10 March 1933, p7; Courier-Mail, 20 October 1933, p3.
The Havills disposed of their early flat developments as rapidly as possible. Both Ardmore and Acton, for example, were sold about September 1933. However, Allambie (1935) in Moray Street, and behind this, on the waterfront, Avile Court (1936, £3,500) were more impressively detailed, three-storeyed flat buildings, which the family retained for some years. It is understood that Mr and Mrs Havill resided at Ardmore before moving to a flat in Avile Court. 48

Some builder-owners concentrated on budget-priced developments. In the second half of the 1930s E.F. Morey, for example, constructed numerous maisonettes and pairs of flats for clients, as well as his own speculative projects. However, he also invested in more substantial brick blocks as speculations, including Morelinn (1936) in Highgate Hill and two on Petrie Terrace – one at the corner of Mountjoy Street (£2,400), and Warren Lodge (£2,950), which occupied a prominent position above the Normanby Fiveways. Both were erected in 1941-1942. Warren Lodge was designed in the modern style and comprised six flats, each with a private entrance. 49

The firm of Wood & Parnwell (Harold Wood and A.J. Parnwell) was extremely active in speculative flat developments in the 1930s and early 1940s. They erected a range of flat types, including numerous timber-framed maisonettes and flats both for clients and as speculations. They also built at least two substantial speculative developments in partnership with Allan Harris: a ‘residential’ on Gregory Terrace (Arran House, 1937) and Alma Flats (1936) in Upper Roma Street. Arran House – a three-storeyed brick and concrete structure with 42 serviced rooms – reputedly sold in 1938 for £10,000. Alma Flats comprised 12 ‘ultra modern’, one-bedroom, brick flats erected at an estimated cost of £5,500. On completion the asking price for this block was £8,500, which, if achieved, returned a substantial profit to the owners. Alma Flats were not luxury flats, but they offered a good standard of finishes and comfortably-sized rooms for the advertised rent of 37/8 per week, and were located within comfortable walking distance of the central business district and the Roma Street Railway Station. 50

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48 BCC, building approval no. 31,218 (2 March 1936, £3,500); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 (5)314/38/54-PM670/87; Courier-Mail, 22 September 1933, p3, 17 July 1935, p18; MWSSB, ‘Survey Field Book no.51C’, July 1912 (updated 1924, 1937), fols 118-120, 122 (1937); personal communication from Val Lancaster, 29 September 2004, based on information from Joan McGuigan, whose father had purchased Avile Court from Fred Havill c1950.

49 BCC, building approval nos 46,663 (7 May 1941) and 47,587 (20 August 1941); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1816 (4)314/38/54-NL660/294; Courier-Mail, 16 May 1944, p6.

Another builder who erected a number of interwar flat developments as private investments was Mr C.L. Baker, ‘formerly of New Zealand’, noted principally for Hampton Court (erected 1937-1938) in Sandgate Road, Clayfield. This was Mr Baker’s second Brisbane flats project and one of this city’s more ambitious – constructed of brick and reinforced concrete at a reputed cost of around £10,000; designed by a prominent Brisbane architect, E.J.A. Weller; and heavily promoted in the local press. With 12 large flats (each two bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and water closet) over three-floors, a roof-top owner’s penthouse, a smart modern design, sculptured façade panels by the architect’s wife, Marquerite Weller, and views over Albion, Hampton Court was promoted as the epitome of Brisbane modernity:

Hampton Court rises from an almost island block on New Sandgate Road, where only seven months ago peaceful grazing was provided for horse and cow.

The building is inspirational and stands as a message of architectural progress, simply expressed in terms of brick, glass and concrete.  

None of Mr Baker’s other projects were as glamorous as Hampton Court, but in each he aimed for an uncluttered, modern style of architecture. They include: Bellevue Court (1937, £5,300) in Bonney Avenue, Clayfield – a two-storey brick block of eight two-bedroom flats designed by G.A. Blackburne and V. Gzell; and two adjacent blocks in Moray Street, New Farm: Clifton Court (1940, £8,000), a two-storeyed block of 16 ‘bed sits’, and Hasely Court (1941, £10,000), a two storeyed-block of eight, two-bedroom flats. With each of Mr Barker’s developments, his wife, Eva May Barker, was cited as the owner and licensee in official records.

51 Sunday Mail, 10 July 1938, p33. See also: BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1937-1938, p286 (652/1937-38); Courier-Mail, 5 October 1937, p24, 18 January 1938, p5, 10 May 1938, p24; 26 July 1938, p17, 2 August 1938, p17.
52 BCC, building approvals nos. 33,820 (12 January 1937), 44,875 (3 March 1940) and 45,625 (12 December 1940); BCC, Health Department, files BCA1800 (2)314/38/54-PM670/140 and BCA1800 (0)314/38/54-PM670/136; Courier-Mail, 1 June 1937, p18.
Conclusion

The 1933 census supports contemporary impressions that flats were occupied by, and were popular with, young married childless couples, older couples whose children had left home, and widows. The data reveals that the typical householder of a flat or tenement in Brisbane in 1933 was under 40 years of age, male, married and a rent-paying tenant. Owner-occupiers and rent-purchasers constituted only about 10 per cent of flat and tenement occupants, tended to be older than rent-paying tenants, and demonstrated a strong correlation between the number of widowed persons, older persons and females.

From the documentary evidence available in the public record, it would appear that flat developments (purpose-built blocks, maisonettes and house conversions) were the 'mum-and-dad' investments of their day. Further, they had a particular attraction for women as owner-occupiers, investors and lessees, and for local builders (mostly small-scale firms) looking to erect profitable investments and speculative developments.

Owning or leasing a flat building in interwar Brisbane was an acceptable and popular business activity for women, and one in which there was potential to secure either property or business ‘goodwill’ or both. Comparatively few women investors in flat buildings appear to have made the quick profits associated with speculative developments – they were there for the long haul. If the development was being undertaken in conjunction with a family member the situation tended to be different.

Builder-owners, having the advantage of eliminating the middle-man in these developments, appear to have been more motivated by a desire to accumulate profits quickly, and therefore were more involved with speculative developments intended for a rapid sale on completion. In many of these enterprises the builder (inevitably male) was assisted by his wife in the enterprise.

Some builder-owners made a determined effort to make a positive contribution to the built environment with their flat developments, and there appears to have been a great deal of pride associated with erecting buildings that were considered to be at the cutting edge of modernity. Many of these blocks remain as testament to that vision.
New Farm
– ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
This chapter examines the ‘flat fashion’ which emerged in New Farm in the interwar years and transformed the suburb into Brisbane’s premier flat district. It is a case study: an examination and exemplification of the arguments and findings identified in previous chapters – a means of illustrating the gradual social acceptance of flat-living in the 1920s; the ‘boom’ in the construction of flat buildings after the depression of the early 1930s; and the association of flat-living with modernity.

New Farm today possesses an ‘urban village’ quality, defined by its sense of physical separation; by housing stock illustrative of patterns of residential development since the mid-nineteenth century; by the presence of numerous interwar flat buildings; by the remnants of the suburb’s industrial past along the riverbanks; by long-established New Farm Park at the eastern end of the suburb; and by the early shopping nodes which still cluster along the Brunswick Street and Merthyr Road arteries.

Two key historical processes have shaped this character. The first was a distinctive and early pattern of suburban development in which the social divide between the affluent and the non-affluent was defined emphatically in the New Farm streetscapes. The second was the intensive closer suburban development of New Farm during the first four decades of the twentieth century, when the grand homes of the nineteenth-century elite – lined up along the ridge overlooking the Brisbane River, Kangaroo Point, and the city centre – were converted into boarding and guest houses, nursing and convalescence homes, private hospitals, tenements and flats, while their surrounding estates were sold and revitalised with new middle-class detached housing and blocks of purpose-designed flats and maisonettes.

The enthusiasm with which New Farm residents embraced flat-living in the years between the end of the Great War and the commencement of war in the Pacific in late 1941, resulted in the construction of approximately 75 blocks of more than two flats and numerous maisonettes (refer to Appendix 13). At this period the old New Farm of fine villas in large grounds was replaced by a suburb of flat-buildings and flat-dwellers – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’, as a Courier-Mail journalist suggested in 1934.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Compacted into an oxbow formed by the river to the immediate north of Brisbane’s central business district, New Farm is bounded to the south-west, south and south-east by the Shaftston and Humbug reaches of the Brisbane River; to the north-west by Harcourt Street (beyond which lies Fortitude Valley); and to the north-east by Chester and Kingsholme streets (north of which the district is known as Teneriffe).

\(^2\) Courier-Mail, 10 August 1934, p21.
Chapter 10: New Farm - ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
A distinctive pattern of suburban development

A distinctive pattern of suburban development

New Farm at the turn of the twentieth century was already a suburb of disparities – in reality two communities separated by the ‘white line’ of Brunswick Street, which runs the length of the suburb from Fortitude Valley to the river.

North-east of this line, in the hollows between Brunswick Street and Teneriffe Hill, the working classes occupied homes within walking distance of their places of employment – the factories and shops of Fortitude Valley, the sugar refinery on the river at New Farm, and the brewery, woolstores and wharves at Teneriffe.3 Their modest timber homes on small allotments were the product of 1880s residential subdivisions;4 a few earlier, larger residences occupied the higher ground near Brunswick Street but these were the exceptions.5 By the early 1900s, most of New Farm north-east of Brunswick Street was the province of the working classes.

South-west of Brunswick Street, occupying the ridge overlooking the Shafston Reach of the Brisbane River, lay a very different New Farm: almost exclusively residential6, middle-class, and picturesque, with numerous beautiful and substantial homes in large shady gardens.

3 The Bulimba Brewery (later the Queensland Brewery) commenced production at Teneriffe in November 1882; the Colonial Sugar Refinery Co. Ltd commenced sugar-refining at New Farm in August 1893; the Bulimba Branch Railway opened in December 1897; and in 1906 Dalgety & Co. Ltd acquired the site of the Queensland Brewery (which had removed to Brunswick Street in Fortitude Valley), demolished the brewery buildings, and erected a large wool and grain store. Over the next half century most of the major wool-broking firms operating in Queensland established wool stores and wharves on the river at Teneriffe. (Queenslander, 9 December 1882, p835; Brisbane Courier, 11 August 1893, p5, 19 February 1906, p3, 22 December 1906, p4).

4 The largest of the 1880s residential subdivisions were the Kingsholme Estate (1885-1886) and the Russell Association Land/Old Race-course Lands (c.1887-1889) (New Farm estate maps, nos. 2137 (c.1887), 2147 (1885), 2149 (1885), 2157 (1889), 2192 (1886), JOL).

5 Earlier middle-class residents included John A. Abraham at Wynberg, Brunswick Street, by September 1863; Thomas J. Burton, a prominent Brisbane solicitor, at Kinkora by mid-1873; James Gibbon at Teneriffe (built 1865) on the hill north of James Street; and E.I.C. Browne, MLC (1863-1882), solicitor, at Kingsholme, established by January 1853 overlooking the river, at the northern end of the suburb. (Brisbane Courier, 21 June 1873, p5, 7 August 1873, p1, 4 November 1876, p6, 22 June 1878, p1; Courier, 15 October 1861, p3, 18 July 1863, p2, 1 September 1863, p1; Moreton Bay Courier, 29 January 1853, p3; Lord in Queenslander, 10 April 1930, p50; D.B. Waterson, A Biographical Dictionary of the Queensland Parliament 1960-1929, Canberra: Australian National University,1972, p23.)

6 The one disruption to the suburban tranquility of this sector of New Farm was James Campbell’s lime works, established in 1878 on the river bank below Langshaw Street, and his Langshaw Planing Mills and Joinery Works opened in 1882 above the lime kilns. Much of the traffic generated by these activities was via ship, with a small wharf constructed to transport limestone and timber to and from the site in Campbell’s own vessels. These works had ceased production by the late 1890s, though sawmilling resumed in the 1910s and continued until the mill was destroyed by fire in February 1931. (QHR, ‘Campbell’s Lime Works’, 601885).

© Helen Bennett
Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 303
Establishing picturesque New Farm

New Farm, one of Brisbane’s earliest suburbs, derived its name from the convict station wheat farm formed by August 1829 on the Brisbane River flats at the south-east end of the oxbow opposite Kangaroo Point. A track or path along the ridge overlooking the river (roughly aligned with later Bowen Terrace and Moray Street) led from Brisbane Town north and east to the new wheat fields.\(^7\)

The Moreton Bay district was opened to free settlement in February 1842 and the following year the ground between Fortitude Valley and the Brisbane River was surveyed in preparation for suburban settlement.\(^8\) The survey defined a number of government roads – later known as Ann Street (the new road to Eagle Farm), Brunswick Street (initially known as New Farm Road), James, Sydney and Langshaw Streets and Merthyr Road – which created the principal pattern of public access through what became the suburb of New Farm.

From the earliest days, the allotments south-west of the New Farm Road attracted the attention of wealthy owners and residents united by class, politics, business interests, family and marriage, establishing the tone of affluent middle-class occupation that rapidly came to characterise this sector of the suburb. At the first sales of New Farm crown land held at Brisbane in 1844, the Shafston Reach allotments overlooking the town and Kangaroo Point were taken up by regional pastoralists and Brisbane businessmen with an eye to investment. With the exception of the ‘rocky precipice’ immediately opposite the tip of Kangaroo Point, by late 1844 the whole of the land between New Farm Road and the Brisbane River to the south-west, and the river flats containing the former convict farm at the eastern end of the oxbow, had been alienated by 10 persons – and the bulk of this by John McConnel of Cressbrook Station in the Brisbane River Valley and Thomas Adams, a Brisbane businessman.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) Henry Wade, ‘Plan of Eastern Suburban Allotments, parish of North Brisbane, county of Stanley’, 1843 (DERM, B12342); JG Steele, *Brisbane Town in Convict Days 1824-1842*, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1975, fig.59.

\(^8\) With the exception of the land parcels fronting Ann Street, the allotments surveyed between what is now James Street and the Shafston Reach of the Brisbane River varied in area from about five to 23 acres (Wade, 1843 and Henry Wade ‘Survey of the environs of Brisbane Town’, 1844, (DERM, MT12)).

\(^9\) John McConnel purchased 11 allotments totalling close to 150 acres: ESAs 11-12 and 14-20 (about 113 acres between the New Farm Road and the Brisbane River) and ESAs 24-25 (35.5 acres between Sydney Street and the river). Thomas Adams bought just over 112 acres: ESAs 5, 6 and 9 (10 acres close to Fortitude Valley, south-west of the New Farm Road), ESA 23 (15 acres at the southern end of the oxbow), and ESAs 22 and 28-30 (close to 87 acres
of low river flats which earlier were part of the convict farm and later were occupied by New Farm Park, the Brisbane Powerhouse and the Colonial Sugar Refinery. (Wade 1843 and 1844; Sydney Morning Herald, 1 March 1844, p4, 1 April 1844, p2, 9 September 1844, p4.)
One of the earliest residents in New Farm was Richard Jones, a former Sydney merchant, who represented the Stanley Boroughs in the New South Wales Parliament 1850-1852. By March 1847 he was residing on about 42 acres extending from the New Farm Road to the river and bounded by Merthyr Road and Sydney Street, acquired from John McConnel. After Jones’ death in 1852 his New Farm house became the town residence of his daughter Mary Australia and her husband Capt. W.B.J. O’Connell of Mondure Station in the Burnett. Robert Ramsay Mackenzie (a future Queensland premier) had married Jones’ daughter Louisa Alexandrina in 1846 and settled nearby at New Farm in the 1850s, gradually acquiring all the land bounded by Brunswick and Sydney streets and the river, which he developed as the Kinellan estate. As early as 1859, a journalist described the O’Connell and Mackenzie residences at New Farm as ‘elegant mansions’ – foreshadowing the New Farm of the late nineteenth century.11

From the late 1850s/early 1860s, several of the suburban allotments along the ridge overlooking the Shaftson Reach of the river were subdivided and promoted to the gentry of Brisbane and region as desirable residential addresses, in competition with North Quay and Wickham Terrace. Accessed via both Brunswick Street and Bowen Terrace, they were close to the business hub of the town, yet provided all the advantages of a suburban retreat. By the mid-1860s a number of substantial homes had been erected here, set within acreages extending from Brunswick Street or Bowen Terrace to the river, with panoramic views over Kangaroo Point and the town.12 When offered for sale, these houses were marketed to the colonial elite, including ‘Members of the Legislature, professional gentlemen, bankers’.13

10 Ramsay was a pastoralist and MLA for the Burnett from 1860 to 1869. He served as premier in 1867-1868. Following his succession as the 10th Baronet of Coul he returned to Scotland in 1869 (Waterson, p119).

11 Moreton Bay Courier, 6 March 1847, p1, 22 April 1848, p3, 13 November 1852, p2, 20 November 1852, p3, 15 October 1853, p2, 12 December 1857, p2, 5 June 1858, p3, 11 August 1858, p3, 29 September 1858, p2, 16 February 1859, p3; Courier, 11 July 1863, p5; Lord in Queenslander, 8 May 1930, p50.

12 Bowen Terrace villas included those of: lawyer and politician Daniel F. Roberts (Ravenswood, 1860); Charles S. Russell, Secretary of the Queensland Club (1861); surveyor David F. Longland (by September 1862); Captain William A. Curphey of the Queensland Steam Navigation Company (Bright Mer Cottage, 1864); Edward B. Forrest, importer and agent for the Colonial Sugar Refinery (by August 1864); RR Smellie, head clerk of the Australasian Steam Navigation Co.’s Brisbane office (1864); wine and spirit merchant Julius Brabant (1865); and auctioneer Arthur Martin (c1865). (Brisbane Courier, 11 May 1864, p1, 8 August 1864, p2, 6 September 1864, p2, 11 April 1865, p3, 24 April 1865, p1, 17 May 1865, p12, 21 October 1865, p1, 6 November 1865, p1, 20 January 1866, p8; Courier, 14 May 1861, p1, 20 August 1861, p3, 8 October 1861, p2, 25 September 1862, p3, 23 December 1862, p4, 10 March 1863, p1, 19 March 1863, p1, 30 May 1863, p1, 6 July 1863, p1, 29 August 1863, p5; Moreton Bay Courier, 5 July 1860, p4, 9 October 1860, p3, 14 February 1861, p2; Queensland Guardian, 15 June 1861, p3; Watson & Mackay 1994, pp32, 71, 115, 160.)

Further land subdivision saw the stumping and clearing of Barker and Moray streets in mid-1865.\(^{14}\)

In the 1870s, New Farm residents south-west of the New Farm Road were joined by some of Queensland’s most prominent citizens, including Edward R. Drury, managing director of the recently-established Queensland National Bank, at Hawstead (completed by November 1876)\(^{15}\); and lawyer and politician Samuel W. Griffith at Merthyr by July 1872.\(^{16}\)

After R.R. Mackenzie returned to Scotland in 1869, Kinellan, the largest of the mid-nineteenth-century New Farm estates, was occupied briefly in the early 1870s by the then premier, Arthur H. Palmer, until the property was sold c1872 to John Sargent Turner, a partner in the mercantile firm of George Raff and Company. George Raff, a prominent politician and one of Queensland’s leading businessmen, was a long-term resident of New Farm, having established Moraybank by April 1856.\(^{17}\)

These large suburban properties of the 1850s to 1870s were semi-rural estates. Owners were dependent on farm labourers and managers to run the farms, and on domestic servants to maintain their homes, gardens, grounds and stables.\(^{18}\) From the 1880s, however, the reliance on groundsmen and farm workers diminished, as subdivision and sale of the mid-nineteenth-century New Farm estates south-west of Brunswick Street intensified during a period of strong population and economic growth in Queensland.\(^{19}\)

\(^{14}\) *Brisbane Courier*, 8 July 1865, p3.

\(^{15}\) *Brisbane Courier*, 16 November 1876, p4.

\(^{16}\) Griffith and his wife had occupied the O’Connell’s former New Farm house by July 1872. Between 1874 and 1879 he acquired title to nearly 16.5 acres surrounding the house, which he had named Merthyr by February 1877, and rebuilt in 1879-1880 (*Brisbane Courier*, 15 July 1872, p2, 22 October 1874, p2, 6 February 1877, p2; DERMS, title docs 10229200, 10365154; Lord in *Queenslander*, 17 April 1930, p50, 8 May 1930, p50; Watson & McKay 1994, p44).

\(^{17}\) *Brisbane Courier*, 30 March 1869, p1, 15 April 1869, p4, 5 May 1870, p1, 31 March 1871, p1, 9 July 1872, p1, 26 February 1874, p2; Lord in *Queenslander*, 3 April 1930, p50; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 19 April 1856, p3; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 November 1870, pp6, 7.

\(^{18}\) Newspaper advertisements for ‘servants wanted’ reveal that the supply of domestic servants in Brisbane was limited. Many were expected to take on multiple roles. Women who could cook, clean, launder and sew (‘general servants’) were much in demand, as were married couples providing a combination of housekeeper and gardener/groom.

\(^{19}\) Pastoral and mining activity, the cultivation, milling and refining of sugar, and agriculture generally, were expanding rapidly. At government instigation, immigrants (principally British) poured into the colony, and between 1881 and 1891 the metropolitan population increased by 174 per cent (Lawson, p19; *ABC of Queensland Statistics*, 1911, p41).
Chapter 10: New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
Establishing picturesque New Farm

While the New Farm estates were reduced considerably in area in the 1880s, many of the early homes retained substantial grounds and gardens. Furthermore, such was the prestige and convenience of the district, so close to town, that it continued to attract affluent residents, who erected elegant residences on land parcels comprised of multiple subdivisions.20

Closer residential settlement in late-nineteenth-century New Farm was supported by public transport providing convenient access to the city centre. New Farm was well-served with cross-river ferries,21 and from the mid-1880s its residents also had access to horse-drawn trams, when the Metropolitan Tramway & Investment Co. Ltd introduced a service from the city to the Breakfast Creek bridge via Queen, Ann and Wickham streets, with a branch line south-east along Brunswick Street.22

By the turn of the century New Farm had the benefit of an electrified tram service. The route ran from Fortitude Valley along Brunswick Street as far as Barker Street, where it deviated through the heart of affluent New Farm via Moray Street, terminating in Merthyr Road. By 1907 the line had been extended along Merthyr Road to terminate at Gray Street near the Hawthorne Ferry.23

20 New residents along Bowen Terrace included: accountant Henry J. Oxley, brother-in-law of Sir Samuel Griffith, at Mossleigh (c1880); architect Andrea Stombuco at Bertholme (1883); Brisbane solicitor Arthur William Chambers (1890); and merchant Robert L. Armour at Dalgarven (1892). New residents along Moray Street included: James M. Davis, warehouse manager for the mercantile firm of S. Hoffnung & Co., at Glenugie (1885); merchant and later politician Theodore Unmack at Moana (1886); businessman and Hebrew minister Jonas M. Myers at Ephrata (1888); merchant Leo S. Benjamin at Inglenoak (1888); and lawyer and politician Horace Tozer, MLA for Wide Bay, at Hinemoa (c1892).

21 By the 1890s New Farm was served by three ferries: to Kangaroo Point (from 1897 this left from the southern end of Merthyr Road); to Norman Park (from the river end of Brunswick Street); and to Hawthorne (from near the northern end of Merthyr Road). Further downstream, a fourth ferry crossed from Commercial Road, Teneriffe, to Oxford Road, Bulimba. (Brisbane Courier, 16 April 1897, p6; 13 June 1931, p19; McKellar’s Map of Brisbane, 1895; Eric J. Morwood, ‘History of Electric Tramways in Brisbane’ pp1-11 in Institute of Engineers Australia, Queensland Division technical papers 11:1, 1970, pp1-2.)

22 The first section of the New Farm horse-tram service, between Ann and Harcourt streets, was opened in November 1885; by the mid-1890s this had been extended to the intersection with Langshaw Street (Brisbane Courier, 16 November 1885, p1; McKellar, 1895).

23 Brisbane’s tramways system was electrified between June 1897 and July 1898. Government approval for construction of the New Farm line was given in March 1898, and the line was laid soon afterwards. (Brisbane Courier, 19 June 1897, p4, 7 March 1898, p4, 26 May 1898, p4; Queensland Survey Office, Map of Brisbane and Suburbs, sh.9, 1907, QSA; Morwood, p2.)
Modernity imposed

Despite closer residential settlement from the 1880s, middle-class New Farm at the outset of the twentieth century retained its old-world atmosphere of leafy tranquillity in the midst of an increasingly busy city. Described in the local press in 1906 as the province of ‘the attractive homes and trim gardens of many of Brisbane’s most distinguished citizens, who enjoy all the advantages of country air and surroundings within a twopenny tram ride of the city proper’, it remained a middle-class enclave.

![Image](Fig. 10.2 Looking north-north-west along Moray Street, c.1906. The tram is turning into or from Merthyr Road. (JOL 4831-0001-0011))

Bowen Terrace and Moray Street were among Brisbane’s most prestigious addresses, occupied by affluent residents from the judiciary, politics, civil service, the church and commerce. Moray Street in particular was considered one of the finest suburban streets in Queensland:

A wealth of tropical shrubs, trees, and palms is one of the pervading features in this thoroughfare, which still skirts the river bank. Houses everywhere are almost, and in some cases quite, hidden from view by the umbrageous curtain of leaves ... Most of them ... are villas with verandahs stretching cool and wide around them ... Some of the homes are built upon the more pretentious two-storied plan, but all are of the best, and Moray-street may be described as quite one of the ‘Quality Streets’ of the State.

24 Brisbane Courier, 12 May 1906, p12.
25 Distinguished residents at this time included the Chief Justice, Sir Pope A. Cooper at Hawstead; Hon. John H. Archibald, MLC at Glenugie; the Hon. Albert J. Callan, MLC at Inglenook; Hon. Edward D. Miles, MLC at Kinellan; and merchant Thomas H. Brown, JP at Merthyr (the property of Sir Samuel Griffith, Australia’s first Chief Justice) (QPOD, 1906).
26 Brisbane Courier, 12 May 1906, p12.
This euphoric image of middle-class suburban New Farm in 1906 failed to withstand the economic and population pressures of the first four decades of the twentieth century. During this period the forces of modernity – increased land subdivision and consequent higher population density; the conversion of larger middle-class homes into multiple-occupancy dwellings; and the growing attraction of the suburb for unmarried or widowed persons and childless couples who preferred to reside in flats – were imposed on a suburb which formerly had accommodated Queensland’s elite in large, rambling, secluded family homes and gardens supported by a substantial servant class.

Residential subdivision

With the population of the Brisbane metropolitan area increasing at a consistently rapid rate, and the consequent demand for new housing reaching unprecedented levels, the suburban estates of New Farm, located within close proximity of Brisbane’s central business district with its retail stores, restaurants, cafés and entertainment venues, and well-served by public transport, attracted the attention of developers and intending residents alike during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

As in the late nineteenth century, New Farm’s public transport network was a key facilitating factor in this process, especially after extensions to the tram services were made in the mid-1920s. The network catered almost exclusively for passenger traffic. While the suburb supported a substantial industrial and wharf sector along its north-eastern river frontages, the traffic generated by these activities passed through branch railways and main roads via Teneriffe, or via shipping along the river. Most of New Farm’s roads, and in particular those in the residential sector south-west of Brunswick Street, remained quietly suburban. Even the tram cars along Moray Street generated little of the hustle and bustle usually associated with a service of this type.

27 Between 1911 and 1921 the Queensland population rose by 25 per cent and the Brisbane metropolitan population by 50 per cent to 209,946 (28 per cent of the State total). By 1933 the Greater Brisbane population had risen to 301,252. Approximately 26 per cent were aged less than 15 years and about 40 per cent were aged 15-39 years (Census 4 April 1921, Bulletin No.2, p3; Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30th June 1933, Vol.I, Part III, Queensland – Population. Detailed Tables for Local Government Areas, Canberra: Commonwealth Statistician, 1933-, pp250-1, 256-7; ABC of Queensland Statistics, 1934, p144).

28 In 1925 Brisbane City Council assumed control of Brisbane’s tramways, and a year later extended the Brunswick Street line to the Norman Park ferry, as the New Farm Park service. The New Farm Wharf tram continued to follow Brunswick, Barker and Moray streets and Merthyr Road to Macquarie Street, where it connected with the Hawthorne ferry. At peak hours, trams reputedly ran ‘every minute or so’ along both services (Morwood, p5; BCC Tramways, ‘Map of Brisbane Electric Tramways System’, 1930; Brisbane Courier, 13 June 1931, p19).

29 BCC, Tramways Department, Annual Report 1929, p17; Brisbane Courier, 13 June 1931, p19.
Chapter 10: New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
Modernity imposed

Early-twentieth-century residential subdivision of middle-class New Farm was underpinned by the rising cost of maintaining and operating large homes in extensive grounds. Many fortunes made during the boom of the 1880s had been lost during the depression of the 1890s, such that second-generation owners often found the upkeep on large estates difficult to sustain. Costs of repairs and maintenance were rising; the supply of domestic servants to assist with the maintenance and upkeep was dwindling (retail or factory work was proving more attractive); and local rates and taxes were escalating.30

As the population density of the elite residential areas of New Farm increased, so land values and municipal rates rose even further, tempting or forcing owners into selling their land to developers and speculators for further subdivision. The 1912 subdivision of what remained of the Hawstead and Ravenswood estates, on the high ground of Bowen Terrace overlooking the Brisbane River, exemplified this trend – although even at this period, an acre of land was retained with each of these early residences (refer to Figure 10.3).31

Fig. 10.3 Hawstead and Ravenswood subdivision, offered at public auction on 18 May 1912. (New Farm estate map 2144 (1912), JOL)

30 In 1910 and again in 1920, the Queensland government legislated to increase the rating powers of local governments, permitting the general rate ceiling to double each time. By this period all of New Farm lay within the boundaries of the Brisbane Municipal Council where, from 1890, rates were levied on the unimproved value of land (Greenwood and Laverty, p358).
31 Key early-twentieth-century New Farm residential subdivisions included several sections of the Kinellan Estate/Turner’s Paddock (c.1900, 1901 and 1905); Matthew’s Nursery Estate, c.1907; the Moraybank Estate, 1908; the Riverside Slopes Estate (formerly part of Moraybank), 1911; and the remnants of Hawstead and Ravenswood, 1912. (New Farm estate maps, nos 2144 (1912), 2146 (c.1900), 2151 (c.1907), 2152 (1908), 2160 (1911), 2166 (1905), JOL.)
By the early 1920s many fine new middle-class homes had been constructed on these subdivisions, especially on the former Kinellan and Moraybank lands.\(^{32}\) They were occupied by an interwar generation of middle-class/white-collar residents who established all the trappings of suburbia at New Farm, including sports venues and clubs, as noted in a 1923 advertisement for a local boarding house:

... New Farm is rapidly becoming the Toorak of Brisbane, with its refined and beautiful class of residence, while the quiet shady walks, ever changing views, parks, cricket, tennis, and bowling clubs, at which visitors are hospitably entertained, make it the most desirable locality in which to reside.\(^ {33}\)

Again, during the construction boom of the 1920s, middle-class New Farm experienced a virtual explosion of new architect-designed residences incorporating the latest in stylistic influences, contributing to, and sustaining, the suburban charm of the place. Consider the following description, published in the local press in 1928:

New Farm has always been one of the most popular residential suburbs of Brisbane. Within easy walking distance of the city, it yet preserves intact the charm and quiet that city life usually destroys. Consequently it is a suburb of beautiful homes and tree-lined streets and contains many of the show places of Brisbane. ...\(^ {34}\)

**Multiple-occupancy accommodation**

While these modern detached villas in their attractive gardens sustained the character of New Farm south-west of Brunswick Street as a pleasant, middle-class suburban enclave, they also tended to obscure a very different residential trend emerging in the suburb: the rise of the multiple-occupancy dwelling. In the early twentieth century a popular solution to the difficulty of maintaining a large, single-family residence was to lease it to someone who was prepared to conduct the place in some form of multiple-occupancy – such as a boarding or guest house, nursing or convalescence home, or private hospital. Developers and investors who had acquired large estates for residential subdivision, in particular favoured this use of an existing asset. From the 1910s, as the old estates began to pass to investor ownership, there was a significant increase in the use of larger, older family homes for these alternative purposes.\(^ {35}\)

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\(^{32}\) *Queenslander*, 5 August 1922, p26.

\(^{33}\) Advertisement for Hawstead Boarding House in *Queensland Magazine*, December 1923, p4.

\(^{34}\) *Sunday Mail*, 28 October 1928, p24.

\(^{35}\) QPOD, 1900-1940.

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*Interpreting the modern: flintland in Brisbane 1920-1941.*

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010. 312
For example, the street directories listed three boarding houses on Bowen Terrace in 1910; by 1915 there were seven as well as a Young Women’s Christian Association Hostel and an Aged Christian Workers’ Home. All occupied former single-family residences. Again, whereas only one New Farm boarding house was advertised in the 1912 edition of the Queensland government’s hotel and boarding house directory, there were eight (located on Bowen Terrace and in Barker and Brunswick streets) in the 1921 edition. In beautiful Moray Street at least two of the larger residences were converted into multiple-occupancy accommodation in the 1910s.

Converting houses into flats
Overlaying the pressures of rate increases, the diminishing incomes of the New Farm gentry and the sale of the old homes to developers, was a chronic, city-wide housing shortage, well established in Brisbane by 1920. As discussed in Chapter 2, over the next decade the construction of new housing in the Brisbane metropolitan area boomed, but failed to keep pace with the demand for both owner-occupied homes and rental housing. The initial response was to convert larger houses, no longer required as single-family homes, into flats and tenements, and New Farm – in close proximity to the city centre, well served by public transport, and with so many large nineteenth-century homes – bore the brunt of this activity.

From the 1920s, middle-class suburban New Farm began to experience a trend already well-established in southern cities: that of converting larger homes into residential flats. There was no difficulty in letting the flats in the conversions, which become so popular that during the 1920s, many of the old New Farm homes occupied as boarding houses and other forms of multiple-occupancy accommodation in the previous two decades, were reinvented a third time as self-contained flats. Usually an owner-manager, lessee-manager or caretaker occupied one of the suites.

36 Queensland Government Intelligence and Tourist Bureau, Hotel and Boarding House Directory of the Principal Cities, Towns and Tourist Resorts in Queensland, 1912 and 1921; QPOD, 1910/11, 1915/16.

37 In January 1912 Dr Thomas Lucas, maker of the famous papaw ointments and lotions, established a sanatorium (Vera Private Hospital) in a former private residence (Vera) at the corner of Moray and Sydney streets. In 1921 this building became the Salvation Army’s Aged Women’s Retreat. On the other side of Moray Street the St Kilda Registered Nurses’ Home was opened in November 1914 by Mrs E Cruise (matron), in a former private house (St Kilda). (Brisbane Courier, 2 January 1912, p4, 20 April 1912, p10, 19 June 1912, p17S, 26 August 1914, p12, 14 November 1914, p12, 19 November 1914, p9, 16 November 1917, p9; QPOD, 1910/11-1922/23.)
Consider, for example, the fate of Arthur William Chambers’ two-storeyed, late 1880s mansion, situated at the corner of Bowen Terrace and Moreton Street on nearly an acre of land. From about 1918 to 1925 the property was leased by Matron Mary Evangeline Malone, who conducted it as the Dunelm Private Hospital. In late 1926/early 1927 the place was converted into Marlborough Mansions flats, under the management of Ernest Holker and his wife, who resided on the premises. The place continued to function as flats for many decades. When advertised for sale in July 1951, Marlborough Mansions comprised 11 self-contained furnished flats, 8 brick garages, laundry and man’s room, and attracted an annual rental return of £1609/8/-.

38 Boyd, p110.
39 A.W. Chambers was a prominent Brisbane solicitor, a partner in the firm of Chambers and McNab. His New Farm residence, erected in 1889-1890, was designed by his father, William Holloway Chambers, who practiced as an architect, civil engineer and surveyor in Brisbane from 1863 (Watson and Mackay 1994, pp32-3).

The Brisbane street directory for 19281929 listed 11 residents of Marlborough Mansions, so it is possible that the 11 flats noted in the 1951 advertisement dated from the mid-1920s conversion.
Perhaps no place better exemplified the progression from private family residence to flats than Hawstead (c.1876) on Bowen Terrace, the old home of E.R. Drury and later that of the Chief Justice, Sir Pope A. Cooper. Formerly one of the show-places of Queensland, the residence, with about an acre of land attached, was offered at public auction in May 1912 (refer to Figure 10.3 above) and from late 1914 was conducted as a boarding or guest house by Mrs George Washington-Power (Josephine Philomena Power).41 Mrs Power had acquired the house block and a number of the adjacent Hawstead subdivisions, which formed part of the garden. A 1923 advertisement emphasising the attractiveness of the grounds and the vistas over the city – offering guests a visceral experience of what once was enjoyed only by the elite of Brisbane – illustrated the importance of a garden for this better type of boarding or guest house:

The delightful old home Hawstead, on Bowen Terrace, Brisbane, is one of the most popular and comfortable places for country visitors to stay at when visiting the metropolis. It is within easy walking distance of the city, and the New Farm tram cars run to within one minute of the door. The location is high, overlooking the river with its shipping activities, and the city in the distance. In the evening, sitting under the shade trees, the twinkling lights reflected in the water gives quite a Venetian effect. The house has spacious verandahs on three sides, affording privacy and opportunity for well-protected sleepouts. The hall and lounge and rooms are lofty and cool in summer. Dining room and conveniences are modern and excellent. The grounds, which extend right through to Moray Street, are well laid out in flower gardens, tennis court, and lawns, as well as shady arbors.42

Perhaps wishing to capitalise on the attractions of the locality, Ernest Joseph Holker (the lessee of Marlborough Mansions) acquired Hawstead in late 1927 and converted it into flats. Mr Holker undertook the alterations himself, at a cost of about £1,000, with plans approved by the city council. Typical of this form of house conversion, the verandahs at Hawstead were enclosed for ‘kitchenettes’ and bathrooms, and the larger rooms were partitioned. Also typical of an investment of this kind, with a garden no longer required for the convenience of guests, in 1928 Mr Holker sold part of the Hawstead grounds fronting Moray Street to William Danaher, who in 1936-1937 erected Edgecliffe Court – a very fine, three-storeyed block of flats – on the site.43

41 Brisbane Courier, 2 December 1914, p2.
43 BCC, building approval no. 13,403 (19 August 1927); DERM, title document 11400189; Lord in Queenslander, 4 June 1931, p46; Sunday Mail, 4 April 1937, p27.
The converting of houses into flats increased the population density and broadened the social mix, but the impact of the New Farm house conversions was not limited to this. The physical impact associated with the closing-in of wide open verandahs for additional bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and water closets, was considerable. The verandah enclosures inhibited air flows, and from cool, shady, well-ventilated homes, many of the conversions became stifling, poorly ventilated, dark environments. Furthermore, they altered the presence of these buildings in the streetscapes, often detrimentally, as implied by the writer of a 1928 article on the otherwise suburban beauty of New Farm:

... Unfortunately many of the larger old homes of New Farm have been refitted and partitioned off to meet the demands of the ever-increasing army of flat-dwellers, to whom New Farm appeals because of its close proximity to the city.44

Materials favoured for these enclosures included weatherboards, chamferboards and fibrous-cement sheeting. The latter was readily available in Australia from 1917, and was popular not only because of the affordability and ease of construction, but also because of its fire-resisting qualities.45

44 Sunday Mail, 28 October 1928, p24.
45 Wunderlich produced a fibrous-cement sheeting which it called Durasbestos in Sydney from 1917, and in the same year James Hardie & Co., also in Sydney, commenced production of Fibrolite. In 1936 a Durasbestos factory was set up in Gaythorne in Brisbane, and in the same year Hardie opened a Fibrolite factory at Newstead. (Brian Carroll, ‘A Very Good Business: one hundred years of James Hardie Industries Limited 1888-1988, Sydney: James Hardie Industries, 1987; Miles Lewis website: http://www.mileslewis.net/australian-building/pdf/cement-concrete/cement-concrete-asbestos.pdf – viewed 22 November 2010.)
The ‘flat fashion’

New Farm, so close to the city centre, appealed not only to investors looking to convert houses into flats; it was also one of the first areas targeted by the developers of purpose-designed flats. The earliest purpose-built block of Brisbane flats identified in this study is Simla Flats, erected in Balfour Street, New Farm, in 1921.

The pattern of flat development in New Farm closely mirrored the phases of Brisbane flat-building identified in Chapter 5. As indicated in Table 10.1 below, during the earliest wave of flat-building in Brisbane (1921-1925), only three New Farm blocks are confirmed as having been erected, and another two possibly. They were in the vanguard of Brisbane flat construction – test cases marketed at middle-class tenants. As flat-living gained in popularity during the second half of the 1920s, another dozen blocks were erected, including flats and shops, a ‘pair of flats’, and maisonettes.

Table 10.1 New Farm: identified purpose-built flats 1921-1929.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date completed</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Other name/s</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Simla Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 Balfour St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Langshaw House</td>
<td>The Embassy</td>
<td>5 Langshaw St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>KD Flats</td>
<td>Evansleigh Flats</td>
<td>116 Merthyr Rd (SW cnr Charles St)</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 by</td>
<td>Monaise</td>
<td></td>
<td>299 Bowen Tce</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923c</td>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Moray St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Foxthorn Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>125-127 Moreton St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Clifford’s Flats and Shops</td>
<td>Merthyr Rd (cnr Hawthorne St)</td>
<td>flats &amp; shops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Hildermerle &amp; Halness</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 Abbott St (N cnr Merthyr Rd)</td>
<td>maisonettes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Malanda Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 Clay St</td>
<td>pair of flats</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927 (1) 1937 (2)</td>
<td>Cora Lynn Flats</td>
<td>Polden</td>
<td>638 Brunswick St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Hampton Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>291 Bowen Tce</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Roselyn Flats</td>
<td>Glenlyon, Monroe</td>
<td>74-78 Kent St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Mrs Benjamin’s Flats and Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>884 Brunswick St &amp; 86 Merthyr Rd</td>
<td>flats &amp; shops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Avalon Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>544-548 Brunswick St (cnr Harcourt St)</td>
<td>flats &amp; shops</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Richmond Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>88 Moreton St (cnr Abbott &amp; Watson Sts)</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Moray Court</td>
<td>Old Moray Court</td>
<td>18 Moray St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Roseville Flats</td>
<td>McBride</td>
<td>20 Bowen St</td>
<td>flats</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proximity to the tramlines along Brunswick Street and Merthyr Road determined the location of the 1920s flat buildings. Six blocks were erected on these streets, and the others were within easy walking distance.46

Unlike the house conversions, the purpose-built blocks of the 1920s made little impact on the streetscapes of middle-class New Farm. At this period, only 8 of the 15 blocks of flats identified were located to the south-west of Brunswick Street. They were few in number, and although distinctive in form when viewed amidst the acres of detached bungalows, they were domestic in scale (none exceeded three storeys) and employed styles fashionable in interwar domestic architecture.

The three-storeyed blocks – Langshaw House (1922), Foxthorn Court (1926) and Hampton Court (1927) – were considered model flat developments. Each was located in a quiet street in the middle-class heart of New Farm, just off the tramlines, and was a well-constructed brick building with an elegant facade, an impressive central entrance, service stairs (which doubled as fire escapes) at the rear, and no more than two flats per floor. They exemplify the appeal of well-designed, well-constructed blocks of flats as investments during this early phase of Brisbane’s experience of purpose-built flats. Two of these blocks (Langshaw House and Foxthorn Court) also illustrated the early popularity of flats as ‘backyard’ projects for the small-scale investor.

The construction of Langshaw House (designed by T.R. Hall and G.G. Prentice) was initiated by Dr Patrick James Kirwan, a prominent Brisbane physician, who in May 1922 registered Langshaw Flats Ltd with £10,000 in capital, for the purpose of acquiring the land and erecting flats. The site had been part of the grounds of Dr Kirwan’s residence, Ceara, facing Brunswick Street, until mid-1920, and was re-purchased for the purpose of erecting flats. Unlike Craigston Flats (1928) on Wickham Terrace, constructed for a syndicate of doctors and business persons who each owned and initially resided in a flat in the building, none of the subscribers to Langshaw Flats Ltd occupied Langshaw House upon completion. The project was a company investment, intended as a rental proposition, and remained in company ownership until 1946.47

46 Brunswick Street in particular attracted its fair share of Brisbane’s purpose-built early flats. In the period 1921-1941, at least 12 blocks of more than two flats and 5 blocks of flats and shops were erected along this artery, between Arthur Street and the Brisbane River.

47 BCC, building approval no. 4,539 (20 June 1922); Brisbane Courier, 13 May 1922, p5; Daily Mail, 4 January 1923, p7; DERM, title document 1146204; QPOD, 1923/24, p64; Queenslander, 13 January 1923, p13; QPOD, 1923/24, p64.
Foxthorn Court was erected for William Edward Fox and his wife Mary Jane in the grounds of their home at 129 Moreton Street. They had acquired title to the property, which comprised three allotments totalling a little over three-quarters of an acre, in December 1925. The speed with which building approval was obtained (March 1926), and the flats erected on two of the allotments by early September that year, suggests that the site was acquired expressly for the purpose. Designed by architects Cavanagh and Cavanagh ‘in accordance with the most modern ideas’, the two-bedroom flats were heavily promoted, and advertised as ‘Highly finished, self-contained, comprising five rooms, balconies, bathroom, hot and cold water, separate electric light and gas service, sound proofed floors, laundries, garages, sewerage connected.’ Mr and Mrs Fox retained the flats as an investment until 1942.48

As was discussed in Chapter 5 the construction of new flats virtually ceased in Brisbane during the severe economic depression of the early 1930s. Only two blocks were built in 1930-1931, and both at New Farm (Ravenswood (1930) on Bowen Terrace and Hamel (1931) on Brunswick Street), reflecting the sustained popularity of the suburb for flat-dwellers and investors in flat buildings.49

By the early 1930s New Farm had emerged as Brisbane’s premier flat district (the majority of flats were in converted houses), and data collated from the Australian census of 30 June 1933 confirms that the area was attracting flat-dwellers in substantial numbers. Two-thirds of flat and tenement dwellers in the Brisbane metropolitan area resided in the inner city and inner suburbs, with the electoral district of Merthyr (encompassing New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead) leading the way with 12.52 per cent of its population residing in flats and tenements. This was significantly higher than the other inner-city/inner-suburban electoral districts: Kurilpa (West End, South Brisbane, Highgate Hill) 9.36 per cent; Brisbane (City, Spring Hill, Petrie Terrace) 8.25 per cent; Fortitude Valley (Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, Herston) 7.89 per cent; and Maree (Kangaroo Point, East Brisbane, Woolloongabba) 6.15 per cent.50

48 BCC, building approval no. 7,037 (8 March 1926); Brisbane Courier, 11 August 1926, p20, 17 August 1926, p9; Daily Mail, 16 March 1926, p16, 24 August 1926, p16; DERM, title documents 11197141 & 10923070.
49 According to Sam Rayner, whose father, Sidney, had built Hamel Flats, the building was named after the famous ‘Battle of Le Hamel’, 4 July 1918, in France, in which Sidney had participated. The Rayners occupied the upper floor, and let two flats below. (Sam Rayner in Gerard Benjamin and Gloria Grant (comps), Reflections on New Farm, New Farm, Qld: New Farm & Districts Historical Society, 2008, p62; Battle of Le Hamel: http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/lehamel.htm – viewed 8 July 2010.)
Despite the growing number of flat-dwellers, the many house conversions, and the appearance of a handful of purpose-built blocks of flats amidst the detached villas and gardens, in the early 1930s middle-class New Farm south-west of Brunswick Street still presented an air of gracious suburban living:

Much could be written about the beautiful homes of this picturesque suburb, with their neatly-kept gardens and lawns and the restful atmosphere which is provided within walking distance of the city. Possibly in no other suburb, comparatively speaking, are there so many shade trees and brilliant displays of the poinsettia, but these could be more adequately appreciated by strolling along its streets on a Sunday afternoon.51

Half a decade later, New Farm was in the midst of a flat building ‘boom’. The construction of purpose-built flats had re-commenced in late 1932 and peaked in 1934-1936 as the economy recovered from severe depression and Brisbane embraced modernity in its varied forms.52 The enthusiasm with which this new form of residential accommodation was greeted in the mid-1930s, significantly altered the suburban streetscapes of New Farm. Blocks of two or three-storeyed flats, mostly of brick or concrete construction, or a mix of brick or concrete, timber and fibrous cement, sprang up throughout New Farm alongside the early mansions of Queensland’s first and second waves of successful pastoralists, entrepreneurs, lawyers and politicians – demonstrating a ‘queer mixture of modernity and obsolescence, of shining newness and tarnished old age, and of startling efficiency and pathetic decrepitude’.53

In 1935 Brisbane architect J.V.D. Coutts noted a strong demand for land in New Farm suitable for residential flats, the latter proving attractive small-scale investments.54 In the 1930s a number of older homes were removed to make way for new flat buildings. For example, the old home of Ravenswood (c.1860, stone construction) was demolished and three new blocks of brick flats were constructed on the site in the early 1930s: Ravenswood (1930), Glenster Court (1934 – later known as Casa Del Rio) and Casa Del Mar (1934). A fourth block of flats was planned but did not eventuate.55

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51 Brisbane Courier, 13 June 1931, p19.
52 At least 10 new blocks of more than two flats were completed annually in 1934, 1935 (and c.1935) and 1936.
54 Courier-Mail, 10 December 1935, p5.
55 ABJQ, 10 March 1930, p8; BCC, building approvals nos. 21,046 (15 March 1930), 25,599 (27 July 1933) and 26,185 (1 December 1933); Brisbane Courier, 20 August 1929, p3, 14 October 1930, p3; Building, 12 October 1934, p17; Telegraph, 16 January 1934, p23.

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In some instances, flats replaced more modern homes. In the wake of a fire in January 1932 which destroyed Burnage, a large interwar house at the corner of Brunswick and Elystan streets opposite New Farm Park, there rose Coronet Flats, an imposing, three-storied brick building, arguably New Farm’s most glamorous block of interwar flats.\(^{56}\)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{coronet_flats_november_1933.png}
\caption{Coronet Flats, November 1933. \((\textit{Courier-Mail}, 17\ November\ 1933, \text{JOL\ 117826})\)}
\end{figure}

Erected in 1933 at an estimated cost of £9,000\(^{57}\), Coronet Flats was a remarkable undertaking on several levels, including: the scale of the project during a period of economic depression; the impressive street elevations; and the speed and quality of the construction and finishes.

The project was the inspiration of a former Melbourne businessman, Max Strickland, owner of the Stucoid Modelling Company in Brisbane. In partnership with George Hayes Limb, a fellow businessman in the fibrous-plaster industry in Melbourne, Strickland acquired 997 Brunswick Street (at the corner of Elystan Road) late in 1932, and the adjacent site, 999 Brunswick Street, a few months later.\(^{58}\)

The site possessed all the qualities considered desirable for a successful flat development (as was discussed in chapter 7): a nearly level, corner block located in an up-and-coming district; quiet, but close to public transport, shops, and entertainment and recreational facilities; and with a pleasant outlook over New Farm Park. From the upper level of the flats, views were gained across New Farm and the river to Hawthorne and Balmoral and over the closer northern suburbs of Brisbane.

\(^{56}\) Burnage, extant by 1922, was the former home of architect Richard Gailey jnr. He had sold the property in 1929, well before the fire of 16 January 1932 (\textit{Brisbane Courier}, 19 January 1932, p16; DERM, title documents 11549223, 11549225; \textit{Queenslander}, 5 August 1922, p26).

\(^{57}\) BCC, building approval no. 25,158 (8 April 1933).

\(^{58}\) Argus, 19 June 1930, p6; DERM, title documents 11549223, 11549225, 11873193, 11873205, 11878166.
Chapter 10: New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’

The ‘flat fashion’

The design (attributed to the owner, businessman Max Strickland⁵⁹), incorporated a dramatic faceted and pleated façade⁶⁰ then considered unique in eastern Australia:

The external elevation is unique in its design in so far as the lay-out of the rooms contains many angles, the idea being that the maximum amount of breeze may be obtained through the steel windows. We are safe in saying that there is no block of flats in the South planned on similar lines.⁶¹

In providing for good ventilation and natural light to, and views from, each flat; in taking advantage of the corner site to establish an imposing street presence; and in the quality of the construction and finishes Coronet Flats created new benchmarks in interwar flat construction in Brisbane. The building contained just 9 flats, three on each level, containing from one to three bedrooms, and all well-appointed and beautifully detailed and finished. Each had a lounge and dining-room separated by folding doors, kitchen, and bathroom with a ‘roman bath’ (i.e., a tiled-in bath) and terrazzo floor. There was a central refrigeration system with individual controls in each flat (the refrigerators made locally ‘to Mr Strickland’s specifications’), a central continuous hot water system, a garbage chute from each flat to the incinerator on the ground floor, gas stoves, electric lighting and power, and sewerage connection. Private garages were constructed along the Elystan Road alignment.⁶²

As the building neared completion in mid-November 1933, the Courier-Mail devoted an entire page (probably funded by the owners and contractors) to promoting the new development and the work of the contractors involved. Coronet Flats was hailed as ‘a building with the architectural dignity of a mansion’ and a ‘landmark’.⁶³

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⁵⁹ Strickland was not a practising architect, but the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, always intensely defensive of the rights of architects, acknowledged Strickland as the designer. A close family friend, the late Mr Arch Trail, always believed that Strickland designed the flats, and that he had studied architecture in Germany prior to emigrating to Australia. (ABJQ, 10 January 1934, p17; personal communication, Arch Trail, 22 August, 2004.)

⁶⁰ Michael Gunn, principal of Michael Gunn Architects, suggests that the pleated facade may have been influenced by early 1920s German Brick Expressionism and suspects that ‘the angled treatment of projecting rooms on the two street elevations was principally adopted as a formal compositional device for breaking down the horizontal bulk of the exterior into a series of vertically proportioned planes. Essentially, it is a squat building, but the vertical proportions of each faceted wall obscure this compositionally. A related benefit of this formal device is the capture of breezes not strictly perpendicular to each street elevation. But in my opinion this aspect is ancillary to the formal one.’ (Personal communication, Michael Gunn, 18 August and 2 December 2010).

⁶¹ ABJQ, 10 January 1934, p17.

⁶² ABJQ, 10 January 1934, pp17-8; Courier-Mail, 17 November 1933, p5, 28 April 1934, p3.

⁶³ Courier-Mail, 17 November 1933, p5.
What was more remarkable about this building was that it was an expensive development constructed during a period of severe economic depression. It may be argued that the owners were able to take advantage of the lower costs of materials and labour to obtain a better-quality building for their money than would be possible in more stable economic times, but the scale of this project gave considerable employment to local tradesmen and manufacturers, as was made much of in the Courier-Mail article.

When completed, the building was advertised as ‘Unsurpassed, Exclusive, Ultra-modern’, and ‘Not a convenience over-looked’, but Strickland appears to have overestimated the capacity of the rental market. In late February 1934 rents were reduced, to 50/- per week for a one-bedroom flat and 75/- for a three-bedroom flat; in May this price range dropped again, to 45/- to 70/-.

Max Strickland had intended, if the project was a success, to build a second block next door, fronting Brunswick Street, but this did not eventuate. He and his wife resided at Coronet Flats until Strickland and Limb sold the property in 1939.

Strickland’s experience with Coronet Flats highlighted why developers in Brisbane failed to invest in high-end or large-scale flat developments: there was not a tenant base sufficiently large and willing (or able) to pay the higher rents that projects of this calibre necessitated. In 1933 and again in 1940, larger-scale flat projects were proposed for New Farm, but neither eventuated.

New Farm, so close to the city heart but suburban in nature, had borne the brunt of purpose-built flat development in Brisbane since the early 1920s, and by the mid-1930s the physical, demographic and social effects were becoming apparent.

65 Brisbane Courier, 21 April 1933, p5.
66 Perhaps inspired by Coronet Flats, Linray Constructions Pty Ltd announced in October 1933 that they intended to erect a block of 40 river-frontage flats at Gray Street, next to the Hawthorne Ferry, to cost £32,000. The developers conducted an architectural competition, which was won by Charles W. Fulton, but the project did not proceed. (Building, 13 November 1933, p57; Courier-Mail, 20 October 1933, pp1, 7, 27 October 1933, p23, 30 November 1933, p1, 1 December 1933, p4, 19 December 1933, p21, 22 December 1933, p19, 6 January 1934, p12, 12 January 1934, p19.) Again, in April 1940 it was announced in the press that Lloyd’s Estates would develop a two-acre river-bank site in Moray Street, to a designed prepared by architect E.J.A. Weller. The project was to be constructed in stages, with the first six flats stepping down the riverbank from Moray Street (Weller had incorporated a similar concept in a block of four flats erected in Westbourne Street, Highgate Hill, in 1939). Whether due to war-time restrictions or otherwise, the New Farm project did not eventuate. (Courier-Mail, 20 September 1938, p22, 29 November 1938, p19, 1 August 1939, 2 April 1940, p13.)
Chapter 10: New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
The ‘flat fashion’

With a suggestion yet again that New Farm was well on its way to becoming the ‘Darlinghurst of Brisbane’, one 1936 newspaper commentator was particularly struck by the physical changes to the suburb:

So willing has the public been to tenant flats that investors have been going forward with building schemes full of confidence. ... With a vengeance, the old order has changed ...

The district about Moray Street is thick with flats, mostly of artistic design and imposing build. As a general rule, also, they are efficiently equipped. Down to the water’s edge on the Shafston Reach front many of these mansions have been built, and with quiet dignity they invite comparison with one another. Out of the ashes of the spectacular fire that some years ago destroyed Rosenfelds’ timber yards, a group of substantial flats has arisen on “the Sawmill Estate”.

The Sawmill Estate estate was a 1933 residential subdivision comprising seven allotments around a short cul-de-sac (Julius Street) and two allotments fronting Moray Street. The site, which abutted the Brisbane River, had been occupied in the 1880s and 1890s by James Campbell’s Langshaw Planing Mills and Joinery Works, and milling recommenced in the 1910s.

In 1924 the site was acquired by Julius Rosenfeld, who continued saw-milling. After a fire in February 1931 destroyed the mill, Rosenfeld subdivided the site for residential development, which he marketed for flat developments. Between 1934 and 1935, each of the seven allotments fronting Julius Street was developed with a purpose-designed block of flats. Demonstrating a range of flat-building types – including a small block with shared bathrooms which technically was a tenement building rather than self-contained flats – they were mostly brick or concrete buildings of two or three storeys, designed in the fashionable styles of the period, intended to attract white-collar tenants.

Fig. 10.6 Ardrossan Flats
north-west corner of Julius and Moray streets, c.1935.
(Courier-Mail, 15 January 1935, p23.)

In 1924 the site was acquired by Julius Rosenfeld, who continued saw-milling. After a fire in February 1931 destroyed the mill, Rosenfeld subdivided the site for residential development, which he marketed for flat developments. Between 1934 and 1935, each of the seven allotments fronting Julius Street was developed with a purpose-designed block of flats. Demonstrating a range of flat-building types – including a small block with shared bathrooms which technically was a tenement building rather than self-contained flats – they were mostly brick or concrete buildings of two or three storeys, designed in the fashionable styles of the period, intended to attract white-collar tenants.


68 QHR, ‘Julius Street Flats’, (601895). The seven blocks of flats erected on the Sawmill Estate were: Ainslie (1934), Ardrossan (1934), Aloha Court (1935), Green Gables (1935), Nanmara (1935), Syncarpia (1935) and Evelyn Court (1935-1938).

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In New Farm as elsewhere in Brisbane, construction of the larger blocks of flats slowed in the late 1930s as financiers tightened access to funding for flat developments (refer to Chapter 5), but there was a renewed flurry of interest after war broke out, with a dozen larger blocks known to have been completed in 1941 (refer to Appendix 13).

Of the 75 blocks of more than two flats identified as having been constructed in the New Farm-Teneriffe district in the period 1921 to 1941, close to 90 per cent were located either along Brunswick Street or south-west of Brunswick Street, sandwiched between the old homes of the nineteenth-century elite and the fashionable detached housing of the interwar middle-classes (refer to Figure 10.7). The large, shady gardens established by the turn of the century gradually disappeared, to be replaced by modern streetscapes of multiple-occupancy dwellings.

The tram routes were favoured for flat developments. Moray Street, between Bowen Terrace and Merthyr Road, was transformed at this period with at least 15 large blocks of new flats – 13 of these erected in the period 1933-1941. Along Brunswick Street, 16 blocks have been confirmed (including Belvedere Flats at the corner of Harcourt Street, and two sets of flats and shops at the intersection with Merthyr Road). Merthyr Road attracted the construction of 11 other new blocks, most of which were constructed between 1932 and 1941. Bowen Terrace (sandwiched between two tramlines) and Lower Bowen Terrace attracted at least 7 new flat developments; all but one of these was erected in the 1930s. Most of the other flats were built in the cross-streets: Kent, Bowen, Barker, Balfour, Langshaw, Moreton, Sydney and Elystan Road; and in Llewellyn and Abbott Streets. Julius Street was a noticeable flat enclave. (Refer to Figure 10.7 overleaf, showing the distribution of flats, flats and shops, maisonettes and pairs of flats, residential and tenements in the New Farm-Teneriffe area).

Maisonettes and pairs of flats, increasingly popular from the 1930s, were scattered throughout the suburb. Some were expensive projects – such as the brick maisonettes at 14-16 Turner Avenue, designed by Chambers and Ford and built by James MacDonald in 1940. Others were more modest timber and fibrous-cement buildings.

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69 BCC, building approval no. 43,019 (10 January 1940).
Fig. 10.7 Distribution of identified purpose-built flat buildings in the New Farm-Teneriffe district, 1920-1941.70

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70 Base map sourced from DERM, November 2010; BCC suburban boundaries current as at 31 December 2010.
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Most of the identified combinations of residential flats and shops in New Farm were located on a tram route, but not always within an established shopping node. For example, the 1926 timber building at the corner of Merthyr Road and Hawthorne Street, which combined two shops with probably two flats above, was located in New Farm’s working-class residential sector, outside of a commercial centre. The shops (occupied by a hairdresser and a café when first opened) served the immediate locality. 71

Several blocks were built in established small shopping clusters along Brunswick Street. Two of these were located at the intersection of Brunswick Street and Merthyr Road in the heart of New Farm: Mrs Pauline Benjamin’s Flats and Shops (1928) combining three shops with at least two flats above72, on the north-east corner; and at the south-east corner the Tedman family’s Mansted House (1938), a two-storeyed brick building combining seven shops on the ground floor with five flats above. Further north along Brunswick Street, near the intersection with Annie Street and adjacent to a block of two-storeyed, late 1880s shops, Mr and Mrs Dulley, news and real estate agents and furniture dealers, built a small two-storeyed brick building in late 1937, with the business at street level and a flat above, accessed independently of the shop.73

The focus in each of the above flat-and-shop combinations was the shops. In other developments, however, the flats predominated. Avalon Flats (1929), at the intersection of Brunswick and Harcourt streets, combined 26 flats and 2 shops fronting Brunswick Street. As an attraction for prospective tenants, one of the shops opened as a café, and the other was occupied by a chemist. Again, Braemar Flats, a two-storeyed brick building completed in 1938 at the corner of Merthyr Road and Abbott Street, combined five flats (two on the lower level and three on the upper, accessed off Abbott Street), with a corner shop fronting Merthyr Road. The shop was occupied by a grocer, but the rentals for the flats would have provided the principal return on the investment.74

71 Brisbane Courier, 22 June 1926, p9; QPOD, 1928/29-1933
72 Mrs Benjamin and her sons, two of whom were pharmacists, resided in at least one of the flats (Benjamin and Grant, p108).
73 BCC, building approval no. 16,914 (5 September 28); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 314/38/54-PM140/888; BCC, Reports and Proceedings, 1936-1937, p959, (2214/1936-37), 1937-1938, p563, (1287/1937-38); Brisbane Courier, 19 December 1928, p8; QPOD, 1928/29-1940.
74 ABJQ, 1 September 1937, p20; BCC, building approval no. 18,841 (17 May 1929); BCC, Health Department, file BCA1800 314/38/54-PM650/27; Brisbane Courier, 28 May 1929, p11; QPOD, 1928/29-1940.
Despite the intensive flat development, New Farm south-west of Brunswick Street managed to retain a suburban character – due in part to legislative controls over the flat buildings, and in part to the sustained attraction of the suburb for middle-class detached housing.

As discussed in Chapter 4, public concern that multiple-occupancy buildings would lead to poorer living conditions resulted in the implementation of local government building ordinances regulating flat construction. These city-wide controls, with their emphasis on preventing overcrowding and maintaining health and privacy standards in multiple-occupancy dwellings, ensured that the New Farm flat developments did not exceed three storeys; did not occupy more than two-thirds of a site; and were not built to allotment boundaries. New Farm’s modern flat buildings were mostly domestic in scale and set within a yard, usually with a small front garden and a low fence or retaining wall along the street alignment/s. Visually the new forms blended well with existing housing, especially where this was two-storeyed.

A good quality New Farm flat building was constructed of fire-resisting materials such as brick, concrete and fibrous-cement, and provided adequate light and ventilation to each flat. In the majority of blocks, the flats were accessed via a common entrance hall from the street, and each flat was provided with a rear service entrance, which doubled as a fire escape (the latter required by regulation). The average good quality New Farm flat comprised two bedrooms, separate living and dining areas, a kitchen or kitchenette, bathroom, and private water closet. Many also had a small enclosed sunroom or sleep out, private laundry and a garage. In some blocks the laundries were shared, but never the water closets. (If water closets were shared, the accommodation offered was a tenement, the definition of ‘flat’ being that it was self-contained.)

Most of New Farm’s purpose-built interwar flat developments, including many of the more modest projects, were architect-designed. The more prestigious developments attracted some of the best designers in Brisbane (refer to Table 10.2 overleaf).

76 The above comments are based on a survey of New Farm flat buildings, using: official documentation associated with the building and licensing of flats; searches of contemporary newspapers and trade journals; and visual confirmation.
Chapter 10: New Farm – ‘the Darlinghurst of Brisbane’
The ‘flat fashion’

Table 10.2 Architects associated with New Farm’s purpose-built flats, 1921-1941.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural office/practitioner</th>
<th>Attributed flat buildings (completion year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addison and MacDonald</td>
<td>Syncarpia (1934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addison &amp; MacDonald &amp; J.J. Ahern</td>
<td>Welsby Court (1937)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.A. Blackburn</td>
<td>Revebern (1934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.A. Blackburn &amp; V Gzell</td>
<td>Cora Lynn (block 2, 1937), 52 Welsby Street (1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
<td>Adelea (1941), Hartle Court (1941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.H. Burley</td>
<td>Cora Lynn (block 1, 1927), Roseville (1929), Moray Court (1929)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavanagh and Cavanagh</td>
<td>Foxthorn Court (1926)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambers and Ford</td>
<td>Hamel (1931), Everton (1932), Ardmore (1932), Acton (1933), Winborne (1933), Glena (1934), Ainslie (1934), 87-89 Oxlide Drive (1934), Ardrossan (1934), Aville Court (1936), Belvedere (1936), Edgecliffe Court (1937), Allambie (1935), Braemar (1938), Eiron Court (1939), 25 Abbott Street (1938), 14-16 Turner Avenue (1940), Baysmere (1941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.L. Cullen</td>
<td>Monte Cassino (1941), Victory Court (1941), Babbitt Court (1941)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.P. Donoghue</td>
<td>Ravenswood (1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Gailey</td>
<td>Mrs Benjamin’s Flats and Shops (1928)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.H. Griffin</td>
<td>Craigielea (1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.R. Hall and G.G. Prentice</td>
<td>Simla (1921), Langshaw House (1922), Hampton Court (1927), Avalon (1929)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.R. Hall and L.B. Powell</td>
<td>Elystan Court (1932)</td>
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<td>C.E. Plant</td>
<td>Moray (1936)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.E. Plant &amp; R.W. Voller</td>
<td>Franklin (1940), 999 Brunswick Street (1941)</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Rae</td>
<td>Casa del Mar (1934), Green Gables (1935), Tudor Court (1935), Lincoln Court (1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.P. Trewern</td>
<td>Clifford’s Flats and Shops (1926), Durham Court (1941)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

As a group, the New Farm blocks of purpose-designed flats presented an image of modernity attractive to a suburban society. As exemplified in Table 10.3 overleaf, designers employed stylistic elements similar to those popularly used in middle-class housing of the period, albeit often a little more flamboyantly. These buildings contributed aesthetically to the streetscapes and found an appreciative audience, even amongst those advocating tough new controls on flat construction:
The most ardent advocates for reform do not make a sweeping condemnation of flats in Brisbane; to the contrary, they express pleasure at the type of new, properly-planned flats that are being erected, particularly in New Farm, which has obvious advantages as a flat area.\(^{77}\)

### Table 10.3 Popular stylistic influences in New Farm’s interwar flat-buildings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Architect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Crafts</td>
<td>KD Flats</td>
<td>Merthyr Road</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>Hampton Court</td>
<td>Bowen Terrace</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Thomas Ramsay Hall and George Gray Prentice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaissance</td>
<td>Ravenswood</td>
<td>Bowen Terrace</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>John Patrick (Jack) Donoghue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudor</td>
<td>Elystan Court</td>
<td>Elystan Road</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>T.R. Hall and Lionel Blythewood Phillips</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>Casa del Mar</td>
<td>Moray Street</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>George Rae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glenster Court (on left)</td>
<td>Moray Street</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Not identified</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Mission</td>
<td>Glena</td>
<td>Brunswick Street</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Claude William Chambers and Eric Marshall Ford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern functional</td>
<td>Aville Court</td>
<td>Moray Street</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Chambers and Ford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern streamlined</td>
<td>Elron Court</td>
<td>Moray Street</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Chambers and Ford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{77}\) Courier-Mail, 18 February 1936, p19.
Modern living

Along with the influx of flats into one of Brisbane’s most exclusive suburbs came demographic and social change. Flat-dwellers were drawn from the broad spectrum of society and the old New Farm elites linked by marriage, social status, religion, business and politics were replaced by a more cosmopolitan population.

While census data does not exist to enable any precise analysis of the flat-dwellers of New Farm in the interwar years, as discussed in Chapter 9, Brisbane flat-dwellers in general were more likely to be tenants than owner-occupiers; the householder of a flat or tenement was more likely to be married than not; it was common for persons with young families of up to two children to reside in flats; and widows and retired persons were attracted to the advantages of the small, easily-managed flat.

If the range of interwar flats available in the suburb is an indication, tenants from a broad mix of socio-economic backgrounds were attracted to the new lifestyle. Affluent tenants occupied the most glamorous and more expensive of the flat developments, and the least affluent resorted to the flats in the converted houses, which were more modestly priced. Alternatively, there were tenements, apartments and serviced rooms which were much more affordable than a self-contained flat. For example, when opened in April 1940, the patriotically-named Elizabeth, a new block of serviced rooms in Harcourt Street, between Bowen Terrace and Brunswick Street, offered large bed-sitting rooms (each with a hand basin plus a daily breakfast tray with ‘tea, toast, fruit’), for 21/- or 22/6 per week. 78 Compare this to a self-contained flat in ultra-modern Elron Court in Lower Bowen Terrace – completed a year earlier in May 1939 at a cost of approximately £7,000 – where a one- or two-bedroom flat was priced at between 45/- and 55/- per week. 79

In comparison to flats in the house conversions, the purpose-built blocks appeared to offer tenants the chance to participate in a modern (rarely bohemian) lifestyle. There was a great deal of ‘hype’ about residing in a modern flat in the interwar period, which was made manifest in the promotion of New Farm’s new flat developments as the epitome of modern living. Whether ‘luxury’ flats or not, the marketing associated with

78 Courier-Mail, 25 April 1940, p15; 2 May 1940, p21, 26 July 1940, p15.
79 BCC, building approval no. 38,659 (5 August 1938); Courier-Mail, 18 May 1939, p9S; Sunday Mail, 7 May 1939, p27.
the new blocks inevitably emphasised the potential for refined, convenient, modern living. Consider the following advertisement for Avalon Flats (1929), erected at a cost of about £15,000 by the Public Curator, for the estate of the late Eugene Doctor:

AVALON – Tenants desirous of securing flats in the new mansion known as "Avalon" at the corner of Harcourt and Brunswick streets, New Farm, are requested to communicate with the Public Curator, who will be pleased to furnish full particulars. Possession, 1st December, 1929. F.W. Mole, Public Curator.

Avalon Flats were marketed as elegant and convenient modern living. The substantial, two-storeyed brick building had an attractive exterior to two streets, was prominently and conveniently situated on a main road and tramline, and possessed a strong presence in the streetscape. The 26 flats – each denoted by a letter of the alphabet – were well finished with dark-stained timber plate-rails and decorative plaster ceilings, and the facilities they offered included electric stove, power point, hot water, bath and shower, and linen and cloak presses. On the downside, the flats were extremely small – barely a notch above ‘bed-sits’. Each comprised one bedroom separated by a curtain or folding doors from a sitting room, kitchen alcove, and combined bathroom and water closet. On completion they attracted high rents (from 40/- per week). They seemed to appeal in particular to short-term guests, usually visitors to Brisbane, who no doubt preferred a small flat to a private hotel with shared conveniences.

For a similar rent a block such as Winborne Flats (1933) in Merthyr Road, offered a more comfortable lifestyle for long-term tenants. The nature of the accommodation offered was fairly standard for a good-quality block of this era, but the spaciousness of the flats was the principal marketing attraction – large rooms, interesting spaces, cool verandahs, garages, pleasant grounds that tenants did not need to maintain, and separate access for trade persons to deliver the daily bread, milk, meat, fruit and vegetables and the weekly groceries. In addition, as an architect pointed out to the *Brisbane Courier* in March 1933: ‘... the modern flat offered the tenant every form of labour-saving device possible, and the amount of help required in the running of the home was reduced to a minimum.’ All this was available from 40/- per week.

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80 BCC, building approval no. 18,841 (17 May 1929).
81 *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1929, p6.
82 *Brisbane Courier*, 14 December 1929, p5, see also the daily social columns 1930-1933; Felipe, 2005.
83 *Brisbane Courier*, 17 March 1933, p7, 24 March 1933, p3; *Courier-Mail*, 12 May 1934, p3.
For the more affluent, New Farm offered some of the most prestigious flats in interwar Brisbane, amongst them Foxthorn Court (1926), Hampton Court (1927), Ravenswood (1930), Elystan Court (1932), Coronet (1933), Glenster Court (1934), Casa del Mar (1934) and Edgecliffe Court (1937). Each of these developments offered tenants something special, whether it was the size or number of the rooms, the finishes and appointments, the services, or the views. Edgecliffe Court, for example, provided comfortable living in large, well-appointed and beautifully decorated flats as well as panoramic views over two reaches of the Brisbane River, and every endeavour was made to eliminate noise between the apartments (an enduring deterrent to flat-living):

> Particular attention has been paid to sound proofing; all joists rest on celotex pads, and are lined on top with the same material, in addition to being packed tightly with wool slag. This material was used for the first time in Brisbane for these flats, and a man was sent up specially from Sydney to supervise its laying and packing.\(^ {84}\)

Whether residing in a luxury flat or bed-sit, New Farm’s flat-dwellers were dependent on neighbourhood facilities to expand life beyond the confines of the walls of the flat. While many interwar blocks possessed small front gardens, and by regulation an open back yard was required in all flat developments, these were common areas and rarely used for recreation. Gone were the old New Farm boarding houses where gardens were maintained for the enjoyment of residents.

However, New Farm was ideally situated for flat-living. With one tram service looping through the suburb via Barker and Moray streets and Merthyr Road, and another along the length of Brunswick Street, almost every flat building in the suburb was within one or two blocks of a tramline. For the cost of a 1d fare, residents were connected to the business, shopping and entertainment facilities of Fortitude Valley and the city centre. Both services also passed through the main New Farm shopping node at the intersection of Brunswick Street and Merthyr Road.\(^ {85}\)

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\(^ {84}\) Sunday Mail, 4 April 1937, p27.

\(^ {85}\) BCC Tramways, ‘Map of Brisbane Electric Tramways System’, 1931.
Local entertainment was available as well. The Astor Picture Theatre at the corner of Brunswick and Barker streets (established as the Merthyr Picture Palace in 1921) was a popular local attraction, and in the 1920s the Rivoli Picture Theatre screened at the corner of Brunswick and Kent streets until converted to a skating rink in 1928.

New Farm Park, established by the Brisbane City Council in 1914 on the river flats at the far southern end of Brunswick Street, was a significant attraction, with its beautifully laid-out gardens, walks, drives, kiosk, bandstand for week-end concerts, sports field, tennis courts and croquet lawn. Opposite the park, on Brunswick Street, was the clubhouse and greens of the New Farm Bowling Club, established in 1907-1908.

Lawn bowls was extremely popular amongst the middle classes during the interwar period, with the names of many of the social elite of New Farm appearing in the weekly news reports of local competitions. In 1935 the vice-president of the New Farm Bowling Club, Mr Albert George Silvester, erected two substantial blocks of brick flats (Osmaston and Repton) in Lower Bowen Terrace, backing onto the bowls club. Mr and Mrs Silvester resided in one of the Repton flats, no doubt happy with their view ‘over-looking bowling green & park’.

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89 The club was formed in 1907, and the greens were opened on 4 May 1908 (Brisbane Courier, 15 March 1907, p1, 15 April 1907, p9, 11 July 1907, p6, 5 May 1908, p3).
Conclusion

New Farm was transformed during the first four decades of the twentieth century from a suburban precinct on the periphery of the town centre, into a densely populated inner-city suburb and Brisbane’s premier flat district. That part of the suburb south-west of Brunswick Street in particular metamorphosed from an enclave of select middle-class family residences set within shady gardens, into a dynamic district in which older homes – converted into flats and tenements, boarding and guest houses, nursing and convalescence homes, private hospitals and hostels – jostled side-by-side with new architect-designed housing and blocks of ultra-modern, purpose-designed flats.

New Farm, so close to the city centre, attracted some of the earliest purpose-built blocks of flats in Brisbane. The pattern of new flat development established within the suburb in the 1920s – the concentration of flat-buildings along the tramlines or within easy walking distance of them – was reinforced during the flat-building boom of the 1930s; as was the emphasis on good-quality brick construction, and comfortable flats designed to appeal to more affluent tenants.

Many of the new blocks of flats contributed aesthetically to the streetscape, and the quality of the appointments in the better-class of buildings encouraged the acceptance of multiple-occupancy dwelling in Brisbane. Life in the more expensive New Farm flats was associated with luxury, glamour, refinement and modernity, contributing to the mystique surrounding interwar flat-living. In reality, life in modern flats could be noisy and restrictive, and that in the house conversions could be depressingly gloomy and inconvenient, but seemingly this did little to undermine the alternative reality in which New Farm flats were promoted as the epitome of desirable modernity.

By late 1941 the new blocks of flats visually dominated many streets in middle-class New Farm, and the old social order had been replaced by a more eclectic social mix, yet the area failed to lose its sense of place and identity. Some of the earliest homes were demolished at this time, but a great number survived as house conversions until much later in the century. The imposition of flats and flat-dwellers proved to be just one more overlay to a suburb that had attracted residential subdivision since the 1840s. If anything, the 1900-1940 era provides a principal source of character to New Farm in the early twenty-first century, and the blocks of interwar flats, the bulk of which still stand, may be viewed as a heritage asset.
Conclusion
– ‘a vernacular modernity’
Any study of the interwar period in Queensland will reveal an era of dynamic social and cultural change, of economic turmoil, and of political experimentation. Western societies had entered a new phase of industrialism driven by, and dependent upon, mass-marketed consumerism. Modernity had been democratized – expressed in new freedoms for women; in exciting new technologies and materials within the reach of the average consumer; and in new approaches to art and design, in which the past was eschewed in favour of a headlong rush into the machine age.

Positioning the interwar ‘flat fashion’ in Brisbane within early-twentieth-century modernity has been central to this thesis, but it was important also to recognize that multiple-occupancy dwelling is a fundamental urban phenomenon.

A familiar pattern of urban development

In the ability to accommodate a large number of persons on a limited area of land, multiple-occupancy dwellings constitute the definitive urban residential form. Invariably they are a response to a sudden and rapid rise in the urban population – whether due to new industry, trade or some other factor; display core characteristics and patterns of development associated with urban rather than rural cultures; and demonstrate, over time and place, a similarity of cause, motive and reaction. While the fashion for living in flats in interwar Brisbane emerged as a response to local demographic, economic and political circumstances, the development and regulation of these flats emulated a pattern found often in earlier societies.

The first stage of flat-dwelling in Brisbane – the conversion of the redundant homes of the elite into multiple-dwellings – mirrored experiences throughout the ancient and medieval world when the location of industry shifted, fashionable addresses changed, populations grew and urban centres attempted to cope with sudden influxes of people. The first purpose-built Brisbane flats similarly echoed the patterns of the past, as the city became more sophisticated in coping with large numbers of people dwelling in close proximity. Attempts to control the standard of construction in Brisbane’s interwar flats bring to mind efforts such as those of early Roman emperors two millennia beforehand, or of nineteenth-century town councils in Britain, to control through legislation, developments directed more at profit-generation than at the health and well-being of tenants.
As in most previous cultures in which multiple-occupancy buildings made a significant contribution to the character of urban life, the interwar flats of Brisbane demonstrated a hierarchy of size and materials, and of quality of design, construction and appointments, which to some measure distinguished between the affluent and the not-so-affluent. It has been argued here, however, that Brisbane’s fashionable new interwar flats simultaneously presented a greater opportunity for a broader spectrum of society to participate in the benefits of twentieth-century modernity.

**Democratising modernity**

Flat-dwelling was symptomatic of the modern industrial world, where rising urban populations and congested cities produced the modern high-rise apartment building. In Australia, flats were a new mode of living, considered perhaps a little cosmopolitan, and embraced most noticeably in Sydney, the nation’s most populous and most industrialised city. The intriguing contradiction in the growing popularity of flats and the flat lifestyle in interwar Brisbane was that this city was not highly industrialised, was not congested, and was in the throes of rapid, extensive, suburban sprawl. Yet in the 1930s, flats proliferated in the inner suburbs and along the tramlines.

Prior to the 1910s, when the fashion for converting houses into flats and tenements intensified in response to a sustained housing shortage, the inhabitants of Brisbane had little experience of residential flats. The house conversions constituted a pragmatic response to the economic times, but the poorly executed, sub-standard accommodation so frequently created by these conversions, shocked the community.

The construction of fashionably-designed, modernly-equipped, purpose-built blocks of brick flats from the early 1920s established a departure from existing residential accommodation in Brisbane. The new blocks were so far in advance of the average house conversion, and generated a lifestyle considered so different from that of the suburban house-and-garden-dweller, that they represented, physically and culturally, the city’s introduction to a distinctively modern, twentieth-century world.
The new flats gained almost instant popularity with the middle classes, who perhaps were more used to flat-life from their travels overseas and interstate. While the working classes were flocking to the outer suburbs in search of increasingly larger detached housing, the middle-classes were voluntarily surrendering the rambling older homes of the nineteenth century to embrace compact living in the modern flat.

It took about a decade for flats in Brisbane to become widely accepted as permanent places of abode rather than as temporary accommodation for a drifting populace. Community reluctance to accept flat-dwelling as a legitimate alternative to life in a detached house resulted from entrenched community fears that flat-living would lead to deteriorated living standards, or threaten family life, or induce immorality. The pressures of sustained, rapid population growth combined with a chronic housing shortage eventually overcame this reluctance, but only after safeguards had been put in place, in the form of local government controls over the construction and licensing of flat buildings.

The attempts to control flat developments during the interwar years should be viewed in the broader context of the widespread spirit of optimism accompanying the creation of Greater Brisbane in 1924-1925. Brisbane was being transformed from a nineteenth-century colonial backwater into a modern metropolis, with future development to be guided by modern urban planning. In an atmosphere of anticipation and expectation that Greater Brisbane would indeed become a great city, town planners, social reformers and politicians successfully lobbied for tight controls on the construction and licensing of multiple-dwelling buildings of all types.

While the 1926 ordinances regulating flat construction influenced the materials, form and location of new purpose-built flats, they failed to stem the flagrant flouting of local by-laws in non-approved and unlicensed house conversions. By the mid-1930s the community largely agreed that purpose-designed, purpose-built flat developments had a function in the life of a modern city, but public concern with the house conversions, the ‘flat problem’, had intensified, and worked against public acceptance of flat-living *per se*. In response, the Brisbane City Council instituted tough new building ordinances regulating flat construction in 1937, including a form of quasi-zoning of flats, and tightened flat licensing ordinances in 1938.
The determination to control the location and quality of flat developments was remarkable, especially given the *laissez-faire* economic climate against which both local and state governments at times struggled. It was fuelled by a deep community distrust of multiple-occupancy, derived largely from the British experience of nineteenth-century working-class tenement and flat buildings and the appalling living conditions they had generated. Given this scenario, what was even more extraordinary was the continued proliferation of inadequate and often unapproved house conversions. Perhaps this says more about Australian anti-authoritarianism than it does about the success or otherwise of the local government ordinances.

The influence of Brisbane professionals, especially the architects, in encouraging good flat design, should not be underestimated. Through an active public campaign of published articles and reports, public lectures, and the design of exemplar buildings, they encouraged developers and investors to look at the ‘big picture’ for a successful flat development, and to resist projects which saw the maximum number of persons crammed into poorly-designed multiple-dwelling buildings. The success of this strategy may be measured in the flat building boom which followed the economic depression of the early 1930s, with architects vying to produce the latest in aesthetically-interesting, well-finished, efficiently-equipped and conveniently-located, new flat buildings, attractive to the client as an investment and to tenants as prospective homes.

By the 1930s flat-dwellers were becoming more sophisticated in their demands for appointments and services in compact homes. The days of putting up with a couple of pieces of old furniture crammed into the enclosed verandah of a house converted into flats were far from over in Brisbane, but tenants who were prepared to pay a higher rent for a modern flat (i.e. a flat in a purpose-built block) now wanted all the latest finishes and conveniences, good light and ventilation, and a pleasant environment. In other words, a broader spectrum of society held expectations that flat-dwelling offered an *entrée* into modernity.
So who occupied these interwar flats? While only a small proportion of the Brisbane metropolitan population resided in a flat or tenement at any one time in the interwar period\(^1\), it is reasonable to assume that, given the comparatively high turnover of tenants, a much larger proportion of the population must have had some experience of the compact lifestyle across the study period.

A review of contemporary commentary, documentary evidence and of the 1933 census data, dispels any myth that flat-living was the prerogative of a bohemian set of unmarried and childless persons. The demographic profile of interwar flat-dwellers reveals that the average householder in a flat or tenement was a tenant rather than an owner-occupier, under 40 years of age, and had a greater likelihood of being male than female, married than unmarried, and salaried or waged rather than self-employed or retired. Most flats and tenements were occupied by two or three persons, and families with one or two children were not uncommon, despite the compact nature of the premises. Further, the close correlation between owner-occupiers, widowed persons, and female heads of households occupying a flat or tenement, supports contemporary impressions that widows were attracted to the flat lifestyle.

This study has drawn attention to the strong participation of women in the ‘flat fashion’ in interwar Brisbane – whether as occupants, owners, investors or developers. For some women, living in flats provided an escape from the drudgery of maintaining a large detached dwelling with little or no assistance from a diminishing servant class. For unmarried and widowed women, flat-living offered a measure of socially-acceptable independence from family. For women with some means, a block of modern flats or a house converted into flats, could be a sound investment and a home. For those with a talent for business, the lease of a flat building could prove a profitable venture. And then there were the women who worked closely with their husband or other family member in the construction of flat buildings as investments or speculative developments.

\(^1\) At the time of 1933 Census, for example, a tiny 3.52 per cent of the metropolitan population resided in a flat or tenement (Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, Part XXXI, p2061).
Subsuming this pro-active participation was the more generic role of women as consumers of the modern. The compact flat with its promise of less housework, reduced need for domestic servants, and greater leisure time, offered a direct appeal to the modern woman, as did the glamorisation of flat-dwelling in women’s and lifestyle magazines. While the reality of living in flats in interwar Brisbane often fell short of the ideal, the inner-urban cosmopolitan lifestyle associated with modern flats was an attractive and enduring myth of particular appeal to women.

Brisbane’s interwar flats were not so much inner-urban as inner-suburban, the majority being located in the inner suburbs – especially Spring Hill, New Farm, Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, South Brisbane, West End, Highgate Hill, and Kangaroo Point – or in nearby older settled districts such as Hamilton, Ascot and Clayfield. These were areas well-served by public transport.

The importance of proximity to a tramline could not be underestimated by interwar architects and realty agents, if a flat development was to prove successful. While more and more of the population was gaining access to private automobiles, one of the inducements for renouncing the greater privacy and space of the average detached dwelling, was the convenient location of the compact flat. Inner-suburban flats, in addition to the ease of access via public transport to the central city, with its places of work, shopping and entertainment, also had the advantage of being located close to established neighbourhood shops, schools and recreation areas. For developers, constructing a flat building close to public transport obviated the need to provide a garage for every flat, which enabled the design of larger (or more) flats within the permitted building footprint.

Most of the new flat buildings were low scale (rarely more than three storeys in height, and averaging four to six flats per block), but designers often sought to make a statement in the streetscape, with imposing façades and dramatic front entrances. Concentrated in the inner suburbs, these modern blocks of picturesque or imposing interwar flats assumed a greater prominence than if they were more dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. New Farm, its streets of nineteenth-century middle-class residences transformed by the presence of new flat buildings and the ubiquitous house conversions, was considered Brisbane’s premier flat district.
Chapter 11: Conclusion – a ‘vernacular modernity’

Impact and legacy

The average flat in the modern interwar blocks was modest in size, averaging between two and four rooms, inclusive of kitchen but exclusive of bathrooms, laundries, and water or earth closets. However, it became very clear in the course of this study that modern flats varied widely in size, substance, appointments, and in the type of tenant targeted. Most ‘bed-sits’ and bachelor flats, for example, were located close to the city centre, and were designed to appeal to singles (either men or women), probably younger persons without family commitments at this stage in their lives, who worked nearby, could afford to purchase most of their meals at local restaurants and cafés, and probably did not own a motor vehicle. At the other end of the spectrum were the flats targeted at affluent tenants, often professionals seeking a well-appointed flat of substantial proportions (the equivalent of a modern middle-class residence, with maid’s room and garage).

Between these two extremes lay the majority of flats: medium to small in the size and number of rooms, usually well-appointed and well-finished (depending on whether they were to be marketed as ‘luxury’ flats), rarely encompassing room for live-in domestic help, and offering some garaging. Given the small proportion of the interwar population which actually resided in purpose-built flats (especially in comparison with Sydney), an impressive number of good quality and ‘luxury’ blocks of flats were erected in interwar Brisbane – possibly reflective of the active campaign waged by architects to improve the standard of design.

**Impact and legacy**

Flats of the interwar era significantly altered the physical appearance of inner-suburban Brisbane. The impact was dual-edged. On the one hand, many well-designed, aesthetically-interesting, purpose-built blocks of flats made a positive contribution to the character of the urban environment. On the other, the house conversions, in their sheer quantity and lack of consideration for aesthetic values, severely eroded the visual amenity of many inner Brisbane streetscapes.

The house conversions of the 1920s and 1930s established a trend that was sustained well beyond the interwar years. Until inner-suburban ‘gentrification’ became fashionable in Brisbane in the 1970s, the inappropriate verandah enclosure, the unappealing brick or fibrous-cement infill to the sub-floors of high-set timber houses,
and the unkempt yard of the rental property, defined the character of many an inner-suburban street.

Such was the impact of the house conversions in shaping the character of much of Brisbane for the greater part of the twentieth century that argument can be made for conserving a number of exemplars as part of Queensland’s cultural heritage. For example, houses which display a good quality of conversion, probably architect-designed, and still clearly demonstrate the nature of the interwar adaptation to flats, may have the potential to be conserved and remain in use as dwellings adequate for the twenty-first century.

Whereas the interwar house conversions presented an image of anti-modernity, of looking to the past rather than the future, the purpose-built blocks of flats erected in Brisbane to 1941, presented an image of modern, middle-class, multiple-occupancy-dwelling acceptable to interwar society. They embodied the new spirit of the age, and in the range of finishes and appointments, and the services they incorporated, illustrated the latest in applied technology in the home. Local government building ordinances and economic and professional influences on new flat construction produced a notable cohesiveness in the form, scale, materials and location of the purpose-designed flat buildings, which contributed strongly and positively to the changing character of inner-suburban Brisbane.

The new flat developments could make a strong aesthetic contribution to a neighbourhood, especially when erected in considerable numbers. The better-quality buildings were brick (or combinations of brick, timber and fibrous-cement sheeting), of fashionable style, mostly restricted to three storeys or less, surrounded with neatly kept lawns and gardens behind low masonry front fences. They showcased styles popular in domestic architecture, were often picturesque, or displayed detailed design features in the façades that were too expensive or inappropriate to incorporate in the average house.

When erected in substantial numbers in popular inner-suburban localities, well-designed flat buildings contributed to a new vision of suburbia in which the detached house no longer dominated. Interspersed between nineteenth-century villas and interwar in-fill housing, modern flat buildings added a visual vibrancy and texture to the
inner suburbs and broadened Brisbane’s understanding of what was meant by the term ‘suburban’. Flat-dwellers may have lived a very different lifestyle to that experienced in the outer suburban residential subdivisions, but their environment remained suburban nonetheless.

Despite the pressures of inner-suburban redevelopment from the 1990s, a great many of Brisbane’s interwar purpose-designed flat buildings survive and retain a distinctive presence in the streetscapes of Brisbane. They provide unique physical evidence of interwar aspirations regarding modernity, and of the impact of community apprehension that multiple-occupancy dwellings ultimately would lead to slum creation. In form, scale and materials, they are a measure of the success of the controls and influences imposed on new flat developments during the interwar years.

They also survive in sufficient numbers to demonstrate the wide range of types of flats popular in the interwar period – from the one-bedroom flat (such as found in Avalon Flats (1929) at New Farm) to the glamorous flats in Craigston (1928) and Carrington (1934), both at Spring Hill. They further demonstrate the range of materials popular at this period for flat construction.

While a small number of these interwar flats have been entered in the Queensland heritage register as places of cultural heritage significance, there are many others deserving of equal recognition and conservation. However, a primary significance of the purpose-designed interwar flat buildings lies in their value as a distinctive group illustrating a fundamental urban form, which had an impact on the character of inner-suburban Brisbane disproportionate to their numerical strength. Furthermore, they are representative of strong social and cultural change during an era in which Brisbane was emerging from its nineteenth-century colonial background and looking toward twentieth-century modernity in all its manifestations.

2 The following interwar Brisbane flats have been entered in the Queensland Heritage Register to date: Bulolo, Fortitude Valley (602188); Cliffe, Kangaroo Point (601650); Craigston, Spring Hill (600165); Greystaines, Hamilton (602551); Julius Street Flats, New Farm (601895); Scott House, Kangaroo Point (601171); and Victoria Flats (601888), Spring Hill.

3 In 1933 the total of flats and tenements (this included the vast army of house conversions) constituted just 5.57 per cent of all occupied private dwellings in the Brisbane metropolitan area. By 1947 this figure has risen to 11.62 per cent, but still represented little challenge to the detached suburban residence as the preferred form of residential accommodation in Brisbane (Census 30 June 1947, Dwellings Summary for Queensland, p7).
Conclusion

‘Flatland’ in Brisbane between about 1920 and 1941, was as much a state of mind as a physical reality. The first purpose-built, modern, self-contained flats were erected in the early 1920s and within little more than a decade, living in a modern flat had become a popular and fashionable trend, synonymous with ‘being modern’.

Living in flats in Brisbane in the interwar years offered a multitude of experiences – from life in a house conversion to that in a modernly-appointed new block of flats. The quality of the appointments in the new flats varied widely, as did the number and size of the rooms, the construction materials, and the services offered. However, whether living in a bed-sit with kitchenette consisting of a gas-ring and sink, or in a two-bedroom luxury flat overlooking the Brisbane River at New Farm or South Brisbane or Hamilton, the occupants were experiencing a lifestyle which simultaneously was an echo of one of the oldest forms of urban residential accommodation, and an expression of twentieth-century modernity.

There was little contradiction in this, for the reinvention of ‘tabloid living’ was as idiosyncratic to Brisbane as to any other Westernised city of the interwar years. To borrow from a concept developed by Miriam Hansen in 1999 and extrapolated upon in a recent publication on the impact of Modernism and modernity in Australia⁴, the interwar flats of Brisbane were an expression of ‘vernacular modernity’. They were symptomatic of an era in which the interpretation of modern life in Brisbane was transmuted through a mix of overseas and interstate influences, and local ambition to transform Brisbane into a modern conglomerate city. The many purpose-built flats surviving as testament to this vision of a modern Brisbane constitutes a valuable cultural legacy.

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Appendices

1-12
1. Flat vocabulary

Cultural connotations and nuances of meaning associated with the words ‘apartment’, ‘flat’ and ‘tenement’ were exported from Britain and Continental Europe to towns and cities throughout the industrialised/imperialised world during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. By the 1920s, culture-specific, vernacular flat vocabularies reflected the diversity of historical circumstances and prevailing imperialist cultural influences in many nations.

Despite widespread international discussion and debate about how to accommodate rising urban populations during the early decades of the twentieth century, the vocabularies in which these debates were conducted remained substantially parochial. The words ‘flat’, ‘tenement’ and ‘apartment’ had acquired subtle meanings and contexts in Brisbane, for example, that differed from their popular usage in places such as the great apartment cities of New York and Paris. What constituted a ‘flat’ in Brisbane in 1930 was more usually termed an ‘apartment’ in the United States, where the model was drawn directly from French apartments. At the same time, the expression ‘apartment house’ in Brisbane, where a local interpretation of flat-living was emerging, was used mainly to describe a private hotel or large lodging or boarding house.

The vocabulary employed in interwar Brisbane to denote a single dwelling within a multiple-occupancy building included: apartment, flat, tenement and maisonette. ‘Home unit’ had made its appearance, but was not widely used. Terms used to describe multiple-dwelling buildings included: residential, block of flats (or flats), tenement house (or tenements), and apartment building (or apartments).

Until the 1930s the terminology associated with multiple-occupancy dwellings in Brisbane was ill-defined, symptomatic of a myriad of past and contemporary influences on, and experiences with, multiple-dwelling buildings. The application of flat terminology was idiosyncratic, overlapping and interchanging. Common meanings gradually emerged, with usage firming as the popularity of flats in Brisbane gained momentum during the 1930s.
Apartment

While the terms ‘apartment’ and ‘flat’ could be used interchangeably in interwar Brisbane, the origins of these words are very different.

‘Apartment’ entered the English language via the French appartement, and is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘a portion of a house or building, consisting of a suite or set of rooms, allotted to the use of a particular person or party.’ The word is derived from the French appartire, to apportion, which in turn comes from the Latin ad (to) and partire (to divide or share). The appartimenta of ancient Rome were multiple-dwelling buildings.¹

According to the compilers of the Oxford English Dictionary, the earliest recorded use of the word ‘apartment’ in English literature dates to 1641, and was used as in the French, to describe a single room or suite of rooms used for residential accommodation, within a larger building. In the United States in the late nineteenth century, the expressions ‘apartment house’ and ‘apartment block’ were coined to describe a purpose-built block of usually middle-class apartments. In North American parlance, an apartment is defined as ‘a set of rooms forming one dwelling-place in a building containing a number of these.’ In general, the American apartment was considered the equivalent of the British middle-class flat, although in 1903, the New York Evening Post claimed that the principal distinction between an apartment and a flat was that the apartment had access to an elevator. The implication is that apartments were better equipped, more expensive buildings, designed and furnished to attract more affluent occupants; flats and tenements in the United States provided basic accommodation for the less affluent classes.²

In interwar Brisbane the term ‘apartment’ was sometimes used in a generic sense, applied to almost any type of multiple-dwelling building – self-contained flats, luxury pent-houses, bachelor flats, serviced rooms, tenements and maisonettes. Newspaper articles, for example, describing a new set of flats under construction, might through the course of the report also refer to the flats as apartments. Mostly, however, ‘apartment’ was used in reference to a serviced room, as in the following Courier-Mail description of Arran House in Spring Hill, under construction in May 1937:

² Oxford English Dictionary.
BLOCK OF SERVICED ROOMS. Construction Type New To Brisbane.

A block of 42 serviced rooms, being erected on Gregory Terrace next to Cliveden Mansions, represents the second example of a new type of construction which has made its appearance in Brisbane. ...

Serviced rooms in such a building are let in single units, and the tenants have the advantage of such services as a continuous supply of hot water (supplied by a plant burning crude oil), the use of Roman baths, garages, etc. The apartments make no provision for meals, but the service includes an early morning cup of tea brought by a maid. A domestic also cleans the rooms and makes the beds of male tenants. In Arran House a spacious lounge, where tenants may entertain guests, will be provided. ³

If the term ‘apartment house’ was used in interwar Brisbane, it was most probably in reference to a residential building of the type exemplified above: often purpose-built, in which were let single, non-self-contained rooms (apartments) which in reality were nothing more than individual bedrooms. This use is illustrated in the following description of a planned new apartment house in 1940:

30 Rooms, Many Windows Featured In New Apartment House

Containing 30 rooms, each adequately served by windows, this three-storeyed apartment house is being built on Bowen Terrace, overlooking the river and facing the south. ...

Besides bedrooms and bathrooms, the building on two floors will contain a dining room, kitchen and laundry, and on the ground floor laundry facilities are being built in. Each bedroom will be fitted with a radio point and an electric call bell. ... ⁴

Occasionally ‘apartment house’ was used to refer to blocks containing bachelor flats, which were a form of combined bed-sitting room. Brisbane’s better class blocks of flats were rarely referred to as ‘apartment houses’, as in the American context. Late-twentieth-century Brisbane usage of ‘apartment’ to denote a home unit or self-contained flat in a high-rise tower should not be confused with interwar usage of the term.

⁴ Courier-Mail, 14 May 1940, p19.
Flat

‘Flat’ has its origins in the Old Norse word *flet*, which probably derives from the Aryan (Indo-European) root *plat*, meaning floor or dwelling. *Flet* or sometimes *flett* first appeared in Britain in fifteenth-century Scotland, where the term was used to refer to the interior rooms of a house. By the eighteenth century, and still only in Scotland, the term had been modified to ‘flat’ and its meaning had come to refer to a floor or storey of a house. Separate suites of rooms within multiple-dwelling buildings were still referred to as ‘houses’. 5

In the early nineteenth century, English writers adapted the Scottish word ‘flat’ to refer to a suite of rooms on one floor, forming a complete residence. At the same time the earlier meaning of flat as a floor or storey within a house was sustained and even expanded, to refer to levels in commercial buildings and warehouses. In nineteenth-century Britain and America ‘flat’ was more commonly used than storey or floor to refer to one level of a multiple-level commercial building or warehouse. By the twentieth century the English use of ‘flat’ referred exclusively to a type of dwelling: a self-contained apartment, a suite of rooms, or even as little as a single room, within a larger residential or mixed-use building. 6

Anthony Sutcliffe refers to the supremacy of the term ‘flat’ above apartment or tenement in Britain by the 1920s:

   *Its big Victorian rivals ‘tenement’ and ‘apartment’, which referred to working-class and middle-class flats respectively, have all but disappeared from popular usage in England since the 1920s, though ‘tenement’ is still used by Englishmen in respect of older Scottish working-class flats, while ‘apartment’ has a currency and significance in the United States very similar to that of ‘flat’ on this side of the Atlantic.* 7

In nineteenth-century colonial Brisbane, which had a substantial Scottish and English emigrant population, ‘flat’ was used to indicate a storey or floor in any building, but principally in commercial buildings and warehouses, as in the following 1892 newspaper report:

6 Oxford English Dictionary; Sutcliffe, p1.
7 Sutcliffe, p1.
An application was continued before Mr Justice Harding yesterday for an injunction restraining Messrs Coote and Co. from continuing objectionable noises on the upper floor of the Central Chambers, leased by them from Messrs Macdonald-Paterson and Co. It appears that Messrs Coote and Co. have taken a lease of the flat for three years, and carry on there the business of tea merchants or tea packers, employing therein a tram or trolley line and a packing machine.  

A random survey of the ‘to let’ columns of local Brisbane newspapers in the period 1910-1920 reveals that this usage of the word was sustained well into the twentieth century.  

‘Flat’ was not used widely in Brisbane to refer to a suite of residential rooms within a larger building until the 1910s, and more so towards the end of that decade. Even letting agencies of this period did not advertise the handling of residential flats. Early equivalents of residential flats took the form of suites of rooms, rarely self-contained, in converted former single-family dwellings, or in houses in which one suite of rooms was let separately by the owner-occupier. Most commonly, these suites were referred to as apartments, furnished rooms, residential chambers, or as half or part of a house. Suites or half-houses offering separate cooking and sanitation facilities most closely approximated the idea of a residential flat.  

Very occasionally ‘flat’ was used in reference to residential accommodation in the early 1910s. This usage became increasingly common from about 1915, but it was still not clear whether ‘flat’ referred to self-contained premises.

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8 Brisbane Courier, 2 December 1892, p4.
9 For example: ‘Warehouse, 2 flats, cellar 30 x 50, American hoist, £4/10/- week, close wharves.’ (Brisbane Courier, 1 January 1910, p9); and ‘To let, 2 factory flats, each 30 x 35, suitable for workshops or store.’ (Brisbane Courier, 4 January 1913, p10).
10 As in the following advertisements from the early 1910s: ‘A Furnished houses, apartments, rooms, to let, suburbs, city, 5/- to £3 per week. Geddes Crawford, Kent's Buildings’ (Brisbane Courier, 15 January 1910, p9) and ‘At Tutton's Residential Agency – Addresses board, residence, furnished houses, apartments, rooms. I have several private families would take gentleman or married couple, suburbs or city.’ (Brisbane Courier, 6 January 1912, p10).
11 As in the following examples from the ‘To Let’ and ‘Board and Residence’ columns in the Brisbane Courier of the early 1910s: ‘Apartments, furnished front bedroom and dining room, and use of kitchen, nice locality.’ (Brisbane Courier, 27 January 1912, p9); ‘To let, half nicely furnished private home, no children; moderate terms respectable tenant.’ (Brisbane Courier, 8 January 1910, p9); and ‘Mascotte Residential Chambers, George-st, near Gardens, apartments to let, terms moderate.’ (Brisbane Courier, 17 July 1915, p10).
By the late 1910s use of the word ‘flat’ in reference to a suite of residential rooms, rather than a single room, had become standard in Brisbane. Often it was qualified by the adjective ‘self-contained’, to differentiate from apartments or suites that shared some facilities. A self-contained flat had its own kitchen, bathroom and water closet.\textsuperscript{12}

By the early 1920s, when the first purpose-designed, self-contained flats were being erected in Brisbane, the better-class house conversions also were self-contained, as in this advertisement for a converted house in the suburb of Teneriffe:

Commodious and well-appointed residence, containing 2 self-contained flats. No.1 comprises large living-room, 2 large bedrooms, kitchen, gas stove, bathroom. No.2 comprises large living-room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom. The whole is nicely painted throughout, and electric light and water, together with gas, are connected; magnificent view. £900. Immediate possession. We will motor you to inspect.\textsuperscript{13}

It took another decade before the Brisbane City Council, when amending its health ordinances in 1930, formally defined ‘flat’ as a fully self-contained dwelling, with private kitchen, bathroom and water closet.\textsuperscript{14}

The gradual adoption of the word ‘flat’ through the 1910s reflected a wider Australian consciousness of multiple-occupancy buildings. Flats were being constructed in Sydney in considerable numbers from the 1910s, and the influence (via trade journals, newspapers and word of mouth) on Brisbane terminology was marked.

**Tenement**

The word ‘tenement’ has had a more varied use than either ‘apartment’ or ‘flat’ in the English language. The word entered the English language in the middle ages via the French tenir, to hold, derived from the Latin tenere. Initially ‘tenement’ referred to any house or building occupied by a tenant and only later to a portion of a house or building occupied by a tenant as a separate dwelling. From the fifteenth century ‘tenement houses’ of commonly seven or eight storeys were being erected in Edinburgh, where

\textsuperscript{12} For example: ‘Flat, furnished, large rooms, balcony, kitchen and bathroom. Apply 3, Milton-terrace’ (Brisbane Courier, 27 July 1918, p14) and ‘At 36, Mansions, George-st, vacant, small, self-contained flat, with all conveniences’ (Brisbane Courier, 23 August 1919, p7).

\textsuperscript{13} Brisbane Courier, 21 August 1920, p8.

\textsuperscript{14} QGG, 16 August 1930, CXXXV:80, p817.
available residential land was limited. They accommodated all levels of society, and there was little to distinguish them from apartment buildings in European cities of this period. During the industrial revolution the term ‘tenement house’ entered popular parlance in the English language, and referred to a building divided into working-class apartments or ‘tenements’ – rarely self-contained and generally of only one or two rooms – in the poorer quarters of a city.\(^{15}\)

The multiple-level, purpose-built tenement house in the form developed in Britain and in Europe during the nineteenth century did not transfer to colonial Australia, where urban land within reasonable proximity of workplaces was readily available. However, by the interwar period the term ‘tenement building’ was being used widely in Brisbane to describe several forms of shared residential accommodation. These ranged from houses converted into non-self contained flats, to purpose-built premises offering private bedrooms but shared bathroom, kitchen, laundry facilities and sometimes a common lounge and/or dining room. ‘Tenement buildings’ differed from boarding houses in that the owner did not supply keep in the form of food, cleaning and washing, but a private hotel also might be referred to as a tenement building. In some instances when describing purpose-built tenements, the terms ‘tenement building’ and ‘apartment house’ were used interchangeably. Occasionally ‘tenement’ was used in interwar Brisbane to describe a purpose-built flat or maisonette, but this application tended to be idiosyncratic, dependent on the background or understanding of the writer, and was not the general usage.

A form of tenement building frequently confused with flats in interwar Brisbane was one which offered a combined bedroom and sitting room (a ‘bed-sit’) together with basic cooking facilities (a ‘kitchenette’), but bathrooms, water closets and laundries were shared. Sometimes these were referred to as ‘bachelor flats’, although the latter were usually self-contained with a private bathroom and water closet.

To add to the confusion, the Commonwealth did not distinguish between a flat and a tenement in published census data until 1947, when differentiation was made between private house (one family), private house (two or more families), share of a private house, flat (including share of flat) and tenement.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) Macquarie Dictionary; Smith, pp212-3.
\(^{16}\) Census 30 June 1947, Dwellings Summary for Queensland, p11.
Residential

While the ‘residential’ is not the focus of this thesis, it was a form of shared accommodation in interwar Brisbane sometimes confused with new flat developments.

By the early 1900s a great many of Brisbane’s mid-to-late-nineteenth-century, inner-city residences had been converted into boarding houses, especially the larger homes along North Quay, Wickham Terrace, Gregory Terrace, and in parts of New Farm and South Brisbane. Many of these were well-known establishments offering board and residence to both permanent and temporary boarders. Large boarding or lodging houses of this type were described as ‘residential establishments’, or in colloquial parlance, ‘residentials’.

By the 1910s Brisbane was experiencing a chronic housing shortage, and the construction of substantial, purpose-built boarding houses had become a profitable investment activity. These were referred to as ‘residential buildings’ or ‘residential establishments’ by architects, builders and planners. Often the owners of these buildings rented them to others (frequently women) to conduct the premises as a boarding house or private hotel.

By the 1920s ‘residential’ was used in Brisbane to describe variously a large boarding house, tenement building, apartment house, or private hotel. The distinguishing nuances in these differing types of shared accommodation were often difficult to define, but all could be comfortably grouped under the term ‘residential’. What residential had in common was a large number of private bedrooms (sometimes serviced) located under one roof and which could be let independently; shared bathrooms, toilets and laundries; and perhaps a common lounge or sitting room. Some residentials also offered shared kitchen facilities. Others included a common dining room where meals, or at least one meal (usually breakfast) could be obtained. A ‘residential’ generally found the middle ground between a self-contained flat and board in a private house.

17 See for example Construction and Local Government Journal, 14 August 1914, p4 and 18 September 1914, p7.
18 Newspaper advertisements such as the following appeared quite regularly: ‘At Spring Hill, new boarding establishment, 22 rooms, low rent.’ (Brisbane Courier, 13 January 1912, p10).
Construction of inner city residentials increased in popularity in Brisbane during the interwar period. Some were quite substantial buildings. For example, in 1926 Brisbane architects Hall and Prentice designed Brunswick House in Fortitude Valley, a three-storeyed ‘residential building’, for Mrs E.M. Gayler. In the late 1920s Brunswick House was listed in the Brisbane street directories as a ‘residential’; by the early 1930s it was known as a ‘private hotel’, illustrating the interchangeability of terminology at this period.  

Again, Yulite, a two-storeyed, purpose-built brick boarding house of 20 rooms at the corner of Leichhardt and Birley Streets, Spring Hill, was erected in 1929 as a ‘residential’ (boarding house); in mid-1932 new management advertised the premises as the Harrow Private Hotel.

**Maisonette**
‘Maisonette’ was a popular interwar term for a semi-detached house set in a suburban yard. The word could be used interchangeably with ‘flat’, especially when the building contained only two dwellings, but there were subtle distinctions between the two forms of residential accommodation.

‘Maisonette’ entered the English language via the French *maison*, meaning house, and its derivative *maisonnette*, a small house. It appears in English literature by 1818, meaning literally a small house. From the early twentieth century, however, the word was being used in England interchangeably with ‘flat’, and now is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘A part of a residential building which is let separately, usually distinguished from a flat by not being all on one floor’. The *Macquarie Dictionary* offers three definitions of maisonette, accommodating the Australian context:

1. a small house.
2. SA [South Australia] a semi-detached house.
3. Brit a self-contained flat extending over two floors.

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19 Phillips Smith Conwell Architects Archive: Job no. 770 (3 plans, undated – Hall & Prentice); QPOD, 1927-1940.
20 BCC, building approval no. 18,263 (25 Feb 1929); Brisbane Courier, 20 Aug 1929, p3; Steering Wheel & Society and Home, 1 August 1932, pp53-4.
21 *Oxford English Dictionary*.
22 *Macquarie Dictionary*.
The Australian application of ‘maisonette’ in reference to a pair of semi-detached houses is not limited to South Australia – all the Australia states built maisonettes in the interwar period, if not earlier.

Pairs of semi-detached houses have had a long history in Brisbane, being popular from at least the 1860s as rental propositions. In nineteenth-century Brisbane, more than two semi-detached houses were referred to as a terrace or row or tenement building, rather than maisonettes. A few nineteenth-century semi-detached houses survive in inner-suburban Brisbane, especially in the hollows of Spring Hill and at Kangaroo Point, Petrie Terrace, West End and South Brisbane.23

In the interwar period ‘maisonettes’ were also referred to in Brisbane as a ‘pair of houses’, ‘two semi-detached houses’ or ‘twin houses’.

**Home Unit**

‘Unit’, or ‘home unit’, was in use in the United States during the interwar years of the twentieth century, but was not widely used in Brisbane at the time. The term is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘an accommodation unit in a larger building or group of buildings, especially in a block of flats or a motel’, its use confined largely to the United States, Australia and New Zealand. American architect Frank Lloyd Wright used the term ‘unit-block system’ in 1932, when referring to new apartments he was designing. The term ‘home unit’ occasionally was used interchangeably with ‘flat’ in Sydney in the 1930s, but not in Brisbane.24

Today, the Australian home unit is defined as ‘one of a number of dwelling apartments in the same building, each owned under separate title, frequently by the occupier’.25

Individual title to a flat, apartment or home unit was not available in Australia during the interwar period. Queensland did not possess the legislation to provide for strata titles until the 1960s.

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23 Surviving early maisonettes or semi-detached houses in Brisbane include: Low’s Cottages (1860s), Spring Hill; Moody’s Cottages (1870s), Spring Hill; Silverwells (1860s), Kangaroo Point; Warriston (1880s), Red Hill; and Astrea (1880s), West End (QHR, 600243, 600276, 600304, 600308 and 600341).

24 For example ‘The Hopes and Pasadena, Darlighurst Rd, Sydney, embody 34 self-contained ‘home units’, each one of which is a miracle in modern domestic efficiency.’ (S. Curotta, ‘Modern Flats’ in *Building*, 12 May 1930, p119.)

25 Macquarie Dictionary.
2. Using census data

Most of the data pertaining to the presence of flats in the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1911 is indicative rather than conclusive, given that the published census tables rarely distinguish between private house and ‘tenement therein’. The 1921 census provides more detailed information, but the most exhaustive data is found in the 1933 tables. The greatest difficulty in using the 1921 and 1933 census reports is that although ‘flats’ and ‘tenements’ are distinguished in definition, they were grouped for the purposes of statistical analysis. Also, at each census there was a slight variation to the boundary of the Brisbane metropolitan area, and some change in terminology and categorisation.

Census of 3 April 1911

For the purposes of statistical analysis the Commonwealth Statistician defined the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1911 as all land within a ten-mile radius of the Brisbane General Post Office (199,369 acres). This included the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane; the towns of Hamilton, Ithaca, Toowong, Windsor and part of the town of Sandgate; and the shires of Balmoral, Coorparoo, Stephens, Taringa and Toombul and parts of the shires of Belmont, Enoggera, Indooroopilly, Kedron, Pine, Sherwood, Tingalpa, Wynnum and Yeerongpilly (refer to Figure A2.1 below).

The 1911 census does not provide data relating solely to residential flats. In 1911 there were very few blocks of purpose-built flats in Australia (Sydney being the main location). The term ‘residential flat’ was applied mostly to a suite of rooms, sometimes self-contained but not always, in a converted private house. At the 1911 census, dwellings were categorised as either ‘private’ or ‘other than private’ and were further sub-categorised, with ‘Tenement in Private House’ being the sub-category closest to the concept of a flat (refer to Table A2.1 below).

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27 The Census of 1911 was conducted under the provisions of the Commonwealth Census and Statistics Act 1905, which defined ‘dwelling’ as:

a building, erection, or tenement, whether permanent or temporary, which is wholly or partly used for the purpose of human habitation and includes any ship or other vessel in any port of the Commonwealth or in any inland waters thereof, or any ship or vessel registered in Australia on a passage between any two Commonwealth ports. (The Acts of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Vol.1, 1901-1911, Melbourne: Charles F. Maxwell, 1913, p160).

There was no attempt to further define the term ‘tenement’ under the definitions. However, section 10(2) of the Act made it clear that a tenement or flat, for the purposes of statistical analysis, was classified as a dwelling house.
In 1911 the Commonwealth Statistician interpreted ‘dwelling’ as including a flat or an apartment in a dwelling house. It is understood therefore that the sub-category ‘Tenement in Private House’ includes ‘flats’ and ‘apartments in a dwelling house’.  

The statistics relating to ‘Tenement in Private House’ made no distinction between a self-contained flat and a room or suite of rooms in which the occupants shared kitchen and bathroom facilities with other tenants in the same building; nor between purpose-built flats and flats in houses converted for the purpose.

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Table A2.1 Commonwealth Census of 1911 – sub-categories of ‘dwelling’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private Dwelling</th>
<th>Dwelling Other Than Private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private House</td>
<td>Caretaker’s Quarters in Store, Office, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenement in Private House</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boarding House, Lodging House, Coffee Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious Institution [non-educational]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charitable Institution [other than hospital]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Penal Establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Military and Naval Establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Barracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Station and Quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wagons, Trains, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where a dwelling is let, sublet, or held in different apartments and occupied by different persons or families, each part so let, sublet, or held and used for the purpose of human habitation shall be deemed a dwelling house (Commonwealth Acts, Vol.1 1901-1911, p162).


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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, 31 December 2010.
Fig. A2.1 Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Census boundary map, 3 April 1911.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{30} Census 3 April 1911, Vol.I, following page 434.
Appendix 2
Using census data

Census of 4 April 1921

For the purposes of the census of 4 April 1921 the boundary of the Brisbane metropolitan area differed slightly from that defined in 1911, with the exclusion of additional parts of the town of Sandgate and the shires of Tingalpa and Toombul (refer to Figure A2.2 below). As these areas were of comparatively low population density, the Commonwealth Statistician asserted that the number of dwellings affected was ‘relatively so small that the comparisons may be accepted as valid’.\(^{31}\)

As in the 1911 census, any room or suite of rooms occupied as a tenement or flat was enumerated as an occupied dwelling. While a distinction was made between ‘private house’ and ‘tenement or flat’, there was still no differentiation between purpose-built flats and flats in converted houses. The sub-categories of dwellings remained similar to those used in 1911 (refer to Table A2.2 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table A2.2 Commonwealth Census of 4 April 1921 – sub-categories of ‘dwelling’(^{32})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenement or Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker’s Quarters in Store, Office, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding house, Lodging House, Coffee Palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Institution (non-educational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable Institution (other than Hospital)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penal Establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military or Naval Establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Barracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Station or Quarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others and Unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagon and Camp (not included in totals or population densities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of the 1921 census, tenement or flat was defined as follows:

s.10(2)] ... any room or suite of rooms occupied as a tenement or flat has been considered as a distinct dwelling in conformity with the \textit{Census and Statistics Act 1905-20}, which provides that – ‘Where a building is let, sublet, or held in different apartments and occupied by different persons or families, each part so let or sublet, or held and used for the purpose of human habitation, shall be deemed a dwelling.’\(^ {33}\)

\(^{31}\) \textit{Census 4 April 1921. Bulletin No.21, p3.}
\(^{32}\) \textit{Census 4 April 1921. Bulletin No.21, p9.}
\(^{33}\) \textit{Census 4 April 1921. Bulletin No.21, p4.}
Fig. A2.2 Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Census boundary map, 4 April 1921.34

Appendix 2
Using census data

Census of 30 June 1933

The Commonwealth Statistician’s analysis of the 1933 census returns provides more detailed information about Brisbane flats and tenements than is contained in the 1911 and 1921 reports. The data offers a ‘snapshot’ of the Brisbane ‘flat fashion’ mid-way through the interwar period, after the first flush of interest in purpose-built flat developments in the 1920s and prior to the flat ‘boom’ of the second half of the 1930s.

Under the provisions of the Census and Statistics Act 1905 an Australia census was to be conducted every 10 years, commencing in 1911. A subsequent amendment to the Act made provision for this interval to be altered at the discretion of the responsible minister. Due to the impact of the severe economic depression of the early 1930s, the census scheduled for 1931 was delayed until 30 June 1933. However the findings, published by the Commonwealth Statistician through the 1930s, were the most comprehensive of any of the Australian censuses held to that date.

The 1933 census districts corresponded in the main with the State electoral districts and the area of the newly formed Greater Brisbane corresponded closely to the Brisbane metropolitan area defined in 1921 (refer to Figure A2.3 below), enabling reasonably accurate statistical comparison with past census data.
Fig. A2.3 Brisbane Metropolitan Area: Census boundary map, 30 June 1933.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{35} Census 30 June 1933, Vol.III, after p450.
3. Brisbane City Council records

The other principal source of quantifiable data relating to Brisbane’s interwar flats is found in the registers of building approvals maintained by the Brisbane City Council between 1904 and 1945. Building approvals were issued by the City Architect’s office and were recorded in Council minutes only when an ordinance relaxation, which required full council approval, was being requested.

Prior to the formation of Greater Brisbane in 1925, building approval statistics are available only for the City of Brisbane, which was confined to the central business district and the inner suburbs of Spring Hill, Petrie Terrace, Kangaroo Point, Fortitude Valley, Bowen Hills, New Farm, Teneriffe and Newstead. From 1 October 1925 statistics survive for the whole of the Greater Brisbane metropolitan area. Unfortunately there are three significant gaps in the surviving registers: September 1934 to January 1936; April to December 1937; and January to December 1939. As this is the boom period of purpose-built flat construction in Brisbane, these gaps in the archival data are particularly regrettable.

Council reports and proceedings of meetings offer some indication of the continued activity in flat construction during the periods in the late 1930s for which building approvals are missing. From September 1937, new Brisbane City Council ordinances controlling the construction of flats required owners to obtain site approval as well as building approval, and the site approvals were recorded in the minutes of Council meetings. However, not all planned flat construction progressed and sometimes site approval was obtained only as an aid in a property sale. Statistics derived from this source are indicative of the number of flats for which site approval was obtained, but equate only approximately with building approvals either applied for or granted or with the number of blocks of flats actually constructed.

There is also a slight anomaly in the recording processes in place in the mid-1920s, which affects any analysis of the surviving Council records. The provisions of the City of Brisbane Act 1924 provided for Greater Brisbane to be divided into 20 electoral wards, corresponding to the State electoral districts. Each ward elected one councillor and the Mayor was elected separately by the whole of the City.36 For the purposes of administration, the Council bureaucracy further divided the Greater Brisbane area into

36 Refer to Greenwood and Laverty, pp460-1.
seven districts, each of which included several wards. For the first 15 months, while Greater Brisbane was consolidated administratively, these ‘wards’ mostly corresponded to the former cities, towns and shires comprising the Brisbane metropolitan area in 1925. From January 1927, the 20 wards corresponded to the State electoral districts, as provided for under the Act (refer to Table A3.1 below). The State electoral districts and the former local authority districts do not always correspond, which makes problematic any comparative analysis by district of the building approvals data collated by the Council at this period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>October 1925 – December 1926 BCC Electoral Wards correspond to former Local Authorities</th>
<th>From January 1927 BCC Electoral Wards correspond to State Electoral Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sandgate, Toombul, Kedron</td>
<td>Sandgate, Nundah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Windsor, Enoggera</td>
<td>Windsor, Kelvin Grove, part Enoggera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Toowong, Ithaca, Taringa, Moggill</td>
<td>Ithaca, Toowong, part Enoggera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brisbane, Hamilton</td>
<td>Brisbane, Merthyr, Fortitude Valley, Toombul, Paddington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>South Brisbane, Stephens, Coorparoo, Kangaroo Point</td>
<td>Kurilpa, South Brisbane, Maree, Buranda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Balmoral, Wynnum, Belmont</td>
<td>Wynnum, Bulimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sherwood, Yeerongpilly, Tingalpa</td>
<td>Oxley, Logan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 BCC, Registers of Building Approvals, 1904-1941.
4. Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the construction of flat buildings, 1926.\textsuperscript{38}

**Residential Flat and Tenement Buildings**

337. Where it is proposed to alter a building so that it may be used as a dwelling-house or residential flat building, the Council may require that the whole building (when so altered) shall comply with the provisions of this Chapter which apply to a dwelling-house or residential flat building as the case may be.

_Proportion of site which may be covered._

338. Any building hereafter erected, constructed, or altered to contain flats, apartments, or tenements shall not occupy more than fifty percentum of the allotment of land on which it stands:

Provided that where the building is not more than three stories [sic] in height (not including the cellar, if any) it may occupy two-thirds of the allotment;

Provided also that where it has a common flat roof it may occupy two-thirds of the allotment;

Provided also that any building hereafter erected, constructed, or altered to contain flats, apartments, or tenements shall not be erected nearer to the boundary between the allotment on which it stands and any adjoining allotment than a distance of five feet from a building which is of one story [sic] above the ground, or seven feet for a building which is two stories above the ground on the side towards that adjoining allotment, with eighteen inches additional distance for every additional story above two stories;

Provided also that, if the allotment be not in a proclaimed residential district, a residential flat building may be erected with its side-wall adjacent to the side-line of the allotment on which it stands if there are no windows or openings in such wall, or if such windows or openings are to a court in accordance with this Ordinance;

Provided also that a garage erected at a low level, the roof of which serves as part of the garden, yard, or court, shall not be included as a building in calculating the proportion of the area of the allotment that may be occupied by a building.

_Domestic offices – kitchens, bathrooms, water-closets, etc._

(a) Subject to this Chapter, comprised within each flat there shall be a bathroom, water-closet (if a suitable sewerage system is available), and a kitchen or alcove where food may be prepared. A kitchen sink shall be fixed, with running water, and connected with a suitable sewerage system if available.

(b) In a residential flat building where a room is provided for meals to be taken by all the tenants, or a kitchen is provided for the preparation of food for all the tenants, a separate kitchen need not be provided for each flat if specific approval of the Council be obtained beforehand.

(c) In a flat containing not more than four habitable rooms the water-closet may be fixed in the bathroom; in a flat containing five or more habitable rooms in all, the water-closet shall be fixed in a separate compartment.

\textsuperscript{38} QGG, 2 October 1926, CXXVII:87, pp1234-5.

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_Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941_

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, 31 December 2010. 369
(d) The minimum width of one bathroom in each flat shall be five feet six inches, and the minimum floor area thirty-six superficial feet, where the water-closet is in a separate compartment, but the size shall be increased by not less than one foot six inches in length or width where the water-closet is fixed in the bathroom. The minimum width of a water-closet compartment shall be three feet and the minimum floor thirteen and a-half superficial feet.

(e) The floor surfaces of bathrooms on any floor and laundries when above the ground floor shall be of impervious material properly graded and drained. The floor surfaces of water-closets shall be of impervious material properly graded to a suitable outlet.

Bathrooms, water-closets, height of.
The height of a bathroom or of a water-closet shall not be less than eight feet from floor to ceiling for at least one-half the area of the floor (or seven feet six inches if the flushing cistern is placed above the ceiling or if there is no overhead flushing cistern).

Cellar and basement.
(a) A cellar shall not be designed or adapted for occupation as a flat.

(b) A basement shall not be designed or adapted for occupation as a flat unless there is an excavation or natural opening at least three feet wide around the external walls in which there are doors or windows; and unless the bottom of such excavation is at least six inches lower than the level of the floor of the basement.

Privacy
In every flat containing more than one bedroom, bedrooms shall be separately accessible, and one bathroom and one water-closet if in a separate compartment shall be accessible without passing through a bedroom.

Sound-proofness – thickness of walls.
(a) The dividing walls (where not of brick) and the floors between flats shall be so constructed as to minimise the conducting of sound.

(b) Internal walls dividing separate flats, or dividing flats from common halls, if constructed of brick, stone, concrete, or the like material, shall not be of less thickness than nine inches.

(c) Internal walls dividing separate flats, if built of terracotta or other suitable non-combustible material not mentioned above, carried up from beams for each story, shall be of double thickness, with a cavity between of not less than two inches.

Common halls – width, light, and ventilation.
(a) A common hall serving flats containing together not more than eight habitable rooms shall not be less than three feet six inches wide, and shall be increased three inches in width for every additional eight habitable rooms, or fraction thereof served:

Provided that a common hall leading from a main entrance to a stairway shall in no instance be less than four feet wide.

(b) A stairway where serving flats containing together not more than sixty habitable rooms shall be not less than three feet six inches wide: when serving flats containing together more than sixty but not more than seventy habitable rooms, such stairway shall be not less than three feet nine inches wide; when serving
flats containing more than seventy but not more than eighty habitable rooms it shall not be less than four feet wide:

Provided that where an elevator is installed the stairway shall be not less than three feet wide.

(c) In a residential flat building containing more than eighty rooms above the entrance floor, additional stairways shall be provided of similar widths in proportion to the rooms served, except that where such rooms do not exceed one hundred and twenty the second stairway may be a rear stairway not less than two feet nine inches wide.

(d) Every common hall shall have windows and ventilation to the outer air in the proportion provided for habitable rooms in this Chapter, or an equally effective glazed and ventilated skylight. The skylight shall be formed of wired glass or protected by a screen outside of galvanised wire netting no less than twelve gauge, with mesh not more than one inch, fixed at least six inches above the skylight, and projecting beyond every free edge of the skylight not less than six inches.

Garbage.

The owner of every residential flat building shall provide, within each flat or conveniently accessible from each flat, means satisfactory to the Council for conveying garbage to a common receptacle, or separate and suitable receptacles for each flat building holding garbage until it is removed, together with places for such receptacles in the open air or in some closed-off closet or space so that such garbage shall be free from offence, and shall also provide means satisfactory to the Council whereby such receptacles may be removed without having to be conveyed through the main or front entrance of the building.

‘Yard’ and ‘court’.

Where a residential flat building is erected over a building of another class, the terms ‘yard’ and ‘court’ shall be extended to mean unoccupied spaces above such building, of another class, but at or below a line three feet above the floor of the lowest flat with windows or doors facing such yard or court.

Yards.

(a) Every residential flat building shall have a yard at the rear, extending across the entire width of the allotment, open to the sky at every point, and unobstructed except that a fire escape, bridge, or platform not exceeding four feet in width may extend over such yard from such building to a neighbouring building or to the ground.

(b) A building of only one story in height may be erected on the same site as and as an appurtenance to a residential flat building, but shall not encroach on the unbuilt open area (hereinbefore provided for) to an extent greater than ten per centum of such unbuilt-upon area:

Provided, however, that the unbuilt-upon area shall not in any case be reduced below one-third of the area of the allotment.
5. Amendments to Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the
construction of flat buildings, 1937.\textsuperscript{39}

CHAPTER 8 – PART II

1. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building or tenement building on a site which has not first been approved by the Council for that purpose.

2. A person shall not convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building or tenement building or add or commence to add to a flat-building or tenement building, unless the Council has first approved the site thereof as a site for such flat-building or tenement building.

3. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building to contain three or more flats or a tenement building to contain fifteen or more rooms, or add or commence to add to a flat-building so that it will contain three or more flats or to a tenement building so that it will contain fifteen or more rooms, unless the site is sewered premises within the meaning of The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909 to 1924, as applying to the Council, or the Council has first approved the installation thereat of a septic tank or other sanitary system for such building.

4. A person shall not convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building to contain three or more flats or a tenement building to contain fifteen or more rooms, unless the site is sewered premises within the meaning of The Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Acts, 1909 to 1924, as applying to the Council, or the Council has first approved the installation thereat of a septic tank or other sanitary system for such building.

5. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building, or add or commence to add to any flat-building on any land unless such land abuts on a road which is not less than 50 links in width.

6. A person shall not convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building on any land unless such land abuts on a road which is not less than 50 links in width.

7. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building, or convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building, or add or commence to add to a flat-building, on land fronting a street which street is less than 75 links wide and more than 5 chains long, unless the number of flats in such flat-building will not exceed the number of parcels of land in the whole site of such flat-building.

8. For the purpose of this Ordinance a flat-building includes the outbuildings and garages appurtenant to it. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building, or convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building on any parcel or parcels of land so as to cover more than half of the parcel of parcels: Provided that outbuildings not more than one storey in height shall not be included in calculating the area of the flat-building.

Provided further that garages exclusively for the use of the flat-tenants and not more than one storey in height and erected at a low level, so that the roof thereof serve as a portion of the garden, yard, or court, shall not be included in calculating the area of the flat-building.

\textsuperscript{39} QGG, 28 August 1937, CXLIX:55, p569.
Appendix 5

Amendments to Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the construction of flat buildings, 1937.

A person shall not make or commence to make such additions to a flat-building or so erect or add to or commence to erect or add to any outbuilding or garage appurtenant to a flat-building, or so use or permit to be so used any garage appurtenant to a flat-building, that the total area of the flat-building becomes more than half of the parcel or parcels of land on which the flat-building is situated.

9. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building, or convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building, or alter any flat-building, so that any flat therein will have an internal floor space of less than 375 square feet.

10. A person shall not use or let or permit to be used or let any flat constructed or converted after the coming into force of this Ordinance, which has an internal floor space of less than 375 square feet.

11. A person shall not –

(a) Erect or commence to erect a flat-building or tenement building of more than one storey; or

(b) Convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building or tenement building of more than one storey –

unless such flat-building or tenement building is or is to be constructed throughout of brick, concrete, stone, or similar fire-resisting material approved by the City Architect: Provided that wood may be used for floor sheeting, stairs, handrails, banisters, doors, window-sashes, architraves, skirtings, panellings, and finishings, but if wooden floor sheeting is used the space between the floor joists shall be pugged with coke-breeze concrete at least three inches in thickness, or with other material approved by the City Architect, and the underside of the floor joists shall be sheeted with fire-resisting material approved by the City Architect, and if wood is used for stairs it must be hardwood two inches thick.

12. A person shall not erect or commence to erect a flat-building or tenement building of more than three stories [sic], or convert or commence to convert a building into a flat-building or tenement building of more than three stories, without the permission of the Council first obtained.

13. A person shall not convert or commence to convert into a flat-building, a building on a parcel of land containing less than 16 perches.

14. A person shall not convert or commence to convert a building on a parcel of land into a flat-building containing more flats than one for every eight perches in such parcel of land.

15. The Council may refuse to approve a plan of subdivision of any land having a flat-building or tenement building thereon, if the proposed subdivision would leave the flat-building or tenement building on a parcel or parcels upon which it would not have been permissible to construct such flat-building or tenement building under these or any other Ordinances.

16. These Ordinances are to be read and construed in conjunction with Chapters 23 and 48, the latter shall be deemed to have been amended by these Ordinances.

17. If in any premises a suite of rooms is designed, intended, or adapted to be let out for hire as living and/or sleeping accommodation, and such suite has its separate bathroom, space for culinary equipment, and sanitary convenience, then such suite is a flat, for the purposes of these Ordinances.
18. The term ‘flat-building’ in these Ordinances means any premises designed, intended, or adapted to be let out or occupied in whole or in part as flats.

The term ‘tenement building’ includes a building suitable or adapted to be used as a boarding-house or a tenement building, as those terms are defined in Chapter 48 of the Council’s Ordinances.

The term ‘convert’ includes conversion by a structural alteration or addition, and also conversion by a change in the use of a building.

For the purposes of this Part a person who causes or permits another to erect or convert or add to or commence to erect or convert or add to a building shall be deemed to erect or convert or add to such building or commence to erect or convert or add to as well as the person who actually erects or converts or adds to or commences to erect or convert or add to such building.
6. Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the conduct of flat buildings under *The Health Acts, 1900 to 1922, 1930.*

**CHAPTER**

**BOARDING-HOUSES, LODGING-HOUSES, TENEMENT BUILDINGS, AND FLAT BUILDINGS**

*Interpretation*

1. In this Chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the meaning respectively assigned to them, namely:—

‘Boarder’ – A person who obtains for hire board and living and/or sleeping accommodation in any premises.

‘Boarding-house’ – Any premises in which a landlord receives boarders for hire.

‘Chief Inspector’ – The Chief Inspector and Secretary of the Council’s Department of Health; the term includes any person acting for the time being as Chief Inspector.

‘Council’ – Brisbane City Council.

‘Flat’ – If in any premises a suite or suites of rooms is or are let out for hire as living and/or sleeping accommodation, and if, in connection with each such suite so let, separate provision is made for bathroom, culinary equipment, and sanitary convenience, then each such suite is a flat.

‘Flat Building’ – Any premises let out in whole or in part as flats by the landlord for hire.

‘Flat Tenant’ – A person who has hired a flat for living and sleeping accommodation, for the use of himself and/or others.

‘Inspector’ – A Health Inspector or Assistant Health Inspector employed by the Council, or any person for the time being authorised by the Chief Inspector as an inspector for the purposes of this Chapter.

‘Landlord’ – The person from whom all boarders, lodgers, tenement lodgers, and flat-tenants, respectively, derive their right to occupy space and accommodation.

‘Lodger’ – A person who obtains for hire sleeping accommodation in any premises for one or more nights, but without board.

‘Lodging-house’ – Any premises in which a landlord receives lodgers for hire.

‘Premises’ – All buildings and structures and lands within the curtilage thereof.

‘Tenement’ – If in any premises a room or rooms is or are let out as living and/or sleeping rooms for hire by the week or for any longer period, but the occupants of such rooms are not provided with board or with separate bathroom, and culinary equipment, and sanitary accommodation, then each such room or group of rooms let for hire in one hiring is a tenement.
Appendix 6

Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the conduct of flat buildings, 1930.

‘Tenement building’ – Any premises let out in whole or in part as a tenement or tenements by the landlord for hire.

‘Tenement lodger’ – A person who has hired a tenement for the accommodation of himself and/or others.

Registration.

2. (1) The landlord of every boarding-house shall cause the same to be registered annually with the Council in his name.

(2) The landlord of every lodging-house shall cause the same to be registered annually with the Council in his name.

(3) The landlord of every tenement building shall cause the same to be registered annually with the Council in his name.

(4) The landlord of every flat building shall cause the same to be registered annually with the Council in his name.

3. Every person being the landlord of a boarding-house, or of a lodging-house, or of a tenement building, or of a flat building which has not been registered with the Council in his name shall be guilty of an offence:

Provided that a landlord of premises used at the date of the coming into force of this Chapter as a boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building, or flat building, may and shall make application for registration within one month from such date.

Application for registration.

4. (1) Every application for registration under this Chapter shall be made in writing, in the form prescribed by the Chief Inspector, and shall be lodged by the applicant with the Council’s department of Health, together with a fee of five shillings towards the cost of inspection; such fee shall be retained by the Council whether the application be or be not granted; but, if the application be granted, such fee shall be treated as being part of the registration fee hereinafter prescribed. The remainder, if any, of such fee shall be payable within one week after the receipt of notification from the Council that the application has been granted.

(2) Every such application may be granted or refused by the Chief Inspector in his discretion: Provided that any applicant for registration under this Chapter may appeal within twenty-one days to the Town Clerk, in writing, against a refusal of registration by the Chief Inspector, and every such appeal shall be determined by the Council. On a grant of registration, and after payment of the prescribed fee, the Chief Inspector shall issue a certificate of registration to the landlord.

Renewal of registration.

5. Every registration granted shall remain in force until the thirty-first day of December then next and no longer, but may be renewed upon the application of the landlord on the approval of the Chief Inspector (or of the Council on an appeal lodged with the Town Clerk, in writing, within twenty-one days after a refusal by the Chief Inspector) from year to year upon payment of the fee hereinafter prescribed.

An application for renewal shall be lodged and the prescribed fee paid by the fifteenth day of January in every year.

On renewal of registration, the Chief Inspector shall issue a certificate of such renewal to the landlord.
Transfer of certificate of registration.

6. Any certificate of registration may be transferred from the landlord to another person approved by the Chief Inspector, but only if such other person is entitled to possession of the premises covered by the registration. The fact of such transfer shall be endorsed upon the certificate, and shall be witnessed and recorded by an officer of the Council’s Department of Health, and any transfer not so witnessed and recorded shall be of no effect for the purposes of this Chapter. The fee payable to the Council for transfer of a certificate of registration shall be a fee equal to one-half the annual registration fee.

Revocation of certificate.

7. (1) The Council may for any cause deemed by it to be sufficient revoke any registration granted under this Chapter.

(2) Without limiting the Council’s powers as to the revocation of a registration granted under this Chapter, the Chief Inspector may revoke any such registration upon any one or more of the following grounds, namely:—

(a) That the registered premises have not been kept to his satisfaction free from vermin and in a clean, wholesome, and sanitary condition;

(b) That the landlord of the registered premises has been convicted of an offence against this Chapter;

(c) That such landlord has been proved to the Chief Inspector to be a person of evil repute;

(d) That complaint has been made by persons resident near the registered premises and it has been proved to his satisfaction that the premises have been conducted in such a manner that interferes with the peace and good order of the neighbourhood: Provided that the Chief Inspector shall give the landlord of the premises written notice of such complaint and shall duly consider any representations made by the landlord in reference to such complaint;

(e) That the Police Department has reported to him that the landlord and/or occupant is or are of criminal character or tendencies or are otherwise undesirable;

(f) That the premises shall have become, by reason of alterations or neglect to repair and renovate, in such a condition as to be, in the Chief inspector’s opinion, unfit to remain registered.

(3) Wherever the Council, or the Chief Inspector, determines to revoke any registration granted under this Chapter, the Chief Inspector shall give the landlord of the registered premises written notice of such determination, and thereupon the registration shall be revoked as from a date seven clear days after the date on which such notice has been delivered to the landlord: Provided that the landlord may, within such seven clear days, appeal in writing to the Town Clerk against a revocation which is the act of the Chief Inspector under paragraph 2 of this Ordinance, and, in the event of such an appeal, revocation shall be stayed until the matter is determined by the Council.

Construction of premises.

8. (1) In the case of any premises wholly erected since the second day of October, 1926, registration under this Chapter shall not be granted unless the structure of such premises and the equipment thereof conform in every respect with all Ordinances of the Council in force at the date of application for registration.

(2) Premises wholly or partially erected before the said second day of October, 1926, and not in use at the date when this Chapter comes into force as a boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building, or flat
building, shall not be registered until such premises shall have been altered to the satisfaction of the Chief Inspector and the City Architect so as to conform as nearly as is reasonably practical with the requirements of all Ordinances of the Council in force at the date of application for registration.

(3) Premises erected prior to the said second day of October, 1926, which at the time when this Chapter comes into force are in use as a boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building, or flat building, may be registered if the Chief Inspector is satisfied that the construction of the premises provides adequately for the safety, convenience, health, and reasonable comfort of persons resident or who may be resident therein.

(4) Provided that no premises shall be registered under this Chapter, unless there exist in connection therewith to the satisfaction of the Chief Inspector at least two separate and alternative means of exit available in case of fire or other emergency for every person resident therein. Such means of exit shall be adequately protected against fire, and shall be constructed so as to lead as directly as practicable to the ground outside the building.

Dimensions of rooms.

9. (1) The landlord of premises registered under this Chapter, or which ought to be so registered, shall not cause or suffer any room in such premises to be utilised as a sleeping apartment unless it has at least one window opening directly to the external air and light, capable of being opened to at least one half the full extent, and having a total area of light passing space equal to at least one-tenth of the floor area of the room.

(2) The landlord of premises registered under this Chapter, or which ought to be so registered, such not cause or suffer any room in such premises to be utilised as a sleeping room or living room unless it has a height from floor to ceiling of at least 8 feet and a total dimension of at least 800 cubic feet; and the landlord shall not cause or suffer any room to be occupied as a sleeping room by more persons than one unless the dimensions after making allowance for bulky furniture are equal to or in excess of 500 cubic feet for each person occupying such room. ...

(4) The landlord shall be responsible for the fulfilment of the requirements of this Ordinance: Provided that if the landlord does not reside in such premises at the time of the contravention of this Ordinance he shall not be held responsible for such contravention unless, having been once notified of such contravention by an inspector, he fails thereafter and continuously to prevent the recurrence or continuation of such contravention.

Right of entry

10. (1) An inspector shall have a right of entry to inspect premises registered under this Chapter, or which he reasonably thinks ought to be so registered. Any person whosoever obstructs, hinders, or resists an inspector entering or inspecting any such premises or any room therein between the hours of 9 o’clock a.m. and 6 o’clock p.m. on any business day, or, in the case of emergency as hereinafter described, at any hour whatsoever, shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) In an emergency, of which the Chief Inspector may be the judge, the Chief Inspector may direct an inspector to enter and inspect any part of any premises registered under this Chapter, or which he reasonably thinks ought to be so registered, but if such entry and/or inspection be made before 8 o’clock a.m. or after 6 o’clock p.m., on any day, then such inspector shall be accompanied by a police officer.
(3) An inspector may interrogate any person whom he reasonably suspects of being the landlord of a boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement, or flat. Such person shall truthfully answer all questions asked by an inspector. Any person who fails or refuses to answer such questions, or who gives an untruthful answer, shall be guilty of an offence.

(4) The landlord shall produce his certificate of registration or renewal of registration for inspection forthwith upon a demand made upon him for its production by an inspector between the houses of 9 o’clock a.m. and 6 o’clock p.m. on any week day at the registered premises.

Number of persons.

11. The Chief Inspector may, in connection with the registration of any premises under this Chapter, prescribe as a condition of such registration, upon breach whereof such registration may be revoked, the number of persons to be permitted to occupy any room in such premises for the purpose of sleeping therein: Provided that the landlord may appeal in writing to the Town Clerk against such condition at any time within twenty-one days after registration has been granted or renewed, and every such appeal shall be decided by the Council. ...

Duties of landlord.

13. (1) The landlord of premises registered under this Chapter shall cause every yard, area, or other open space within the curtilage thereof to be maintained in good order, and clean and free from any rubbish or stagnant water. He shall cause every passage and every stair available for use in common to be swept every day before 12 noon, and washed thoroughly once at least in every week. He shall keep the windows and internal walls throughout such premises in a cleanly condition, and shall cause the same to be repaired or painted when required so to do by the Chief Inspector. ...

Infectious diseases.

15. The landlord of any premises registered under this Chapter shall at once report to the Chief Inspector any case of infectious disease that may occur therein, and shall take such steps in connection with such case as may be directed by the Chief Inspector. ...

Exemption.

17. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Chapter, registration shall not be required in the case of premises used or occupied entirely by persons who are members of the same family, or premises in which not more than one person is accommodated with board and/or lodging. If in any proceedings for any breach of this Chapter it is alleged that any inmates in any premises are members of the same family, the burden of proving such allegation shall be on the person making it. ...

Supply of water.

19. When it appears other: the Council that a registered boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement, or flat is without a proper supply of water for the use of the boarders, lodgers, tenement lodgers, or flat tenants, as the case may be, and that such supply can be furnished there to at a reasonable rate, the Council may, by notice in writing, required the landlord, within a time specified therein, to obtain such supply and to do all works necessary for that purpose. If the notice is not complied with accordingly, the Council may revoke the registration of the premises until it is complied with.
Evidence of entries.

20. A copy of any entry in any register of boarding-houses, lodging-houses, tenements, or flats kept by the Council shall, when certified by the Chief Inspector, be received as evidence in all courts, and shall be sufficient proof of the matter registered without production of the register or of any document or thing on which the entry is founded.

Non-application of Act.

21. Sections 77 to 80 of The Health Acts, 1900 to 1922, shall not apply to the Council.

Hotels.

22. This Chapter shall not apply to the premises of a licensed victualler under the provisions of The Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1926.

Penalty.

23. Any person who fails to comply with any of the requirements of this Chapter, or commits a breach of any of the provisions of this Chapter, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds, and in addition to a daily penalty not exceeding ten pounds for every day on which such failure or breach continues after notice from the Council.

24. In the computation of fees payable under this Chapter, all rooms in any building capable of being used as living or sleeping rooms shall be taken into account, whether such rooms are or are not let for hire.

Fees.

25. The fees payable to the Council for registration under this Chapter shall be in accordance with the following scale, namely:–

For each boarding-house, lodging-house, tenement building, or flat building, according to the number of all rooms therein capable of being used as sleeping rooms or living rooms, the undermentioned fees:–

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Rooms capable of being used as Sleeping or Living Rooms.</th>
<th>Annual Fee for Registration or Renewal of Registration.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to and including 5 rooms in all</td>
<td>Five shillings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 rooms and up to 100 rooms</td>
<td>One shilling per room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 100 rooms in all</td>
<td>Five pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provided that for the year 1930 only one-half of the above fee shall be payable:

Provided further that, should any premises become liable for registration hereunder after the thirtieth day of June in any year, only one-half of the above fees shall be payable:

Provided further that in no case shall the fee payable be less than five shillings.
Appendix 7

Proposed amendments to Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the conduct of flat buildings, November 1937.

7. Proposed amendments to Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the conduct of flat buildings, November 1937.

Key provisions of proposed amendments to Brisbane City Council ordinances regulating the conduct of boarding houses, lodging houses, tenement houses and flat buildings, tabled at the Brisbane City Council meeting of 16 November 1937.41

1. The term 'lodging house' is dropped, as there is no material difference in fact between a 'lodging house' and a tenement building.

2. The terms 'boarding house', 'flat building' and 'tenement building' are defined with clearer precision.

3. Simplified provision in regard to payment of registration fees.

4. A new provision designed to safeguard the purchaser of lease, sub-lease, goodwill or furniture, of premises registrable under the Chapter, against misrepresentation by or on behalf of the vendor.

5. A new provision requiring that notice be given to the Chief Inspector and the City Architect before any structural alteration or addition is made to registered premises.

6. A new provision for provisional registration in certain approved cases.

7. Abolition of the system of transferring registrations from person to person, but the transferee may obtain new registration on payment of half-fee.

8. Variation in certain approved cases (existing registered premises only), of the cubic space and lighting requirements for habitable rooms, with necessary hygienic safeguards.

9. New provisions against overcrowding of rooms or premises.

10. New provisions in regard to (a) dampness of site, and (b) obstruction of passages, stairways and exits.

11. New provisions prohibiting the use of unsuitable materials in the construction of premises or rooms therein.

12. New provisions making the owner of the premises liable for alterations, repairs, or improvements which are necessary to bring premises which ought to be registered into conformity with the Ordinances – right of appeal allowed.

13. Amended, and more precise, provision in regard to (a) sanitation, and (b) means of ablution.

14. Special provision as to dimensions of rooms used as kitchens.

8. Encouraging residential construction late 1939.

The Decision To Build Now Is Wise One
And These Are THE REASONS
A man's greatest act of faith in his country is his decision to build a home for himself and family. He immediately plants a stake in the land.

And he does more than provide shelter for himself and family. He signs the wages sheet of an army of workers – timber getters, sawmill hands, brick-makers, brick-layers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians – to name a few of the host who combine their energies to build a house.

Get out those rough sketch plans of the ideal home you've been thinking about for years. But this time take them beyond an idea. Make them a reality. ...

Fortunately for the community, this is not the time for the speculator in search of pickings. It is a time for sober and well-considered investment, when the building trade is operating normally on normal price levels. For its continued stability the building industry – a key industry – depends upon ordinary people.

In this, a high-wage State, home-building is a simplified undertaking, primarily because land is relatively cheap.

Brisbane still affords ample room for building expansion in new suburbs, where buyers may expect rapid appreciation in land values.

Public policy here is all in support of the new home-maker. He has the advantage of tram extensions to tap ‘new’ suburbs like Moorooka, Bardon, and Stafford, to name but a few. These areas, and St Lucia (where transport links have yet to be provided) will have the history of Ashgrove, Coorparoo, Holland Park, closely-settled suburbs, which were virgin bush a few years ago. ...

No Australian can claim to share in our much-boasted high standard of living unless he knows the refinements of a modern home in which at least he owns the equity, and which he hopes, some day, to own entirely.

The modern Australian home is a place of quiet beauty and real comfort. Architectural talent these days is devoting itself as much to the creation of beautiful homes as it is to imposing city buildings. Suburban architecture expresses the aspirations of a Young country glimpsing its destiny.

Home-building ideas of the pioneering days have gone by the board. To-day's are in tune with modern ideas of automobiles, aeroplanes, telephones, and radio. Who would desire to slip back into the 19th century when the 20th offers so much?

And so the question resolves itself into one of belief in ourselves. Have the young people of to-day faith in themselves? If they have, home-building plans will not be shelved. They will be executed without delay. ...

Appendix 9
National Security (Building Control) Regulations 11 June 1941


Key provisions:

- permits for new buildings or alterations valued at over £5,000 issued prior to 5 December 1940, and 'not substantially commenced within four months', to be revoked;

- permits for new buildings or alterations valued at over £3,000 and no more than £5,000, issued prior to 23 April 1941, and 'not substantially commenced within four months', to be revoked;

- all applications for building approval to have the consent of the Federal Treasurer unless the application related to:

  (a) the erection of a dwelling house, the estimated cost of which did not exceed £3,000;

  (b) any alteration –

    (i) of a building (other than a hotel, a building containing shop premises or a dwelling-house) where the estimated cost of any alterations did not exceed £1,000;

    (ii) of a hotel or a building containing shop premises where the estimated cost thereof together with the cost of any alterations of that hotel or building in respect of which a building permit has been granted during the prescribed period, did not exceed £500;

    (iii) of a dwelling-house where the estimated cost thereof together with the cost of any alterations to that dwelling-house in respect of which a building permit has been granted during the prescribed period, did not exceed £250;

- where a building permit had been obtained, the cost of construction was not to exceed more that 5 per cent of the estimated price without the Federal Treasurer's consent;

- no building above £500 in value was to be demolished without the consent in writing of the Treasurer; and

- the Federal Treasurer had the authority to exempt persons, buildings or alterations from the application of the Regulations.

---

43 Based on National Security (Building Control) Regulations gazetted on 11 June 1941 and reprinted in Building, 24 July 1941, pp11, 26.

© Helen Bennett
Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, 31 December 2010.
10. Identified purpose-built blocks of flats and flats/shops in Brisbane 1920-1925.\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>Outer walls</th>
<th>Designer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Simla</td>
<td>17 Balfour Street</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>KD/Evansleigh Flats</td>
<td>116 Merthyr Road</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Langshaw House</td>
<td>5 Langshaw Street</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>York House</td>
<td>78 Breakfast Creek Road</td>
<td>Bowen Hills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2?</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Duncan Flats and Shops</td>
<td>24-38 Duncan Street</td>
<td>Fortitude Valley</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hennessey &amp; Hennessey &amp; FR Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Ventnor Flats</td>
<td>15 Edmonstone Street</td>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>8?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Monaise</td>
<td>299 Bowen Tce</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923c</td>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>23 Moray St</td>
<td>New Farm</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Concrete?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Guildford Court</td>
<td>425 Wickham Terrace</td>
<td>Spring Hill</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>SW Prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Victoria Flats</td>
<td>369 Gregory Terrace</td>
<td>Spring Hill</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>TBM Wightman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Wyuna Flats</td>
<td>9 Pixley Street</td>
<td>Kangaroo Point</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; timber</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Stanley Flats</td>
<td>? 10 Stanley Street (West)</td>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>6?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Lahey’s Corner (shops and flats)</td>
<td>Stanley St East (NW cnr Lisburn St)</td>
<td>East Brisbane</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>TBM Wightman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Wilkestone Flats</td>
<td>Breakfast Creek Road</td>
<td>Bowen Hills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2?</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Kia-ora Flats</td>
<td>84-90 Montague Road</td>
<td>South Brisbane</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2?</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924 &amp; 1925</td>
<td>Garden Flats and Service Station</td>
<td>72-74 George Street</td>
<td>Brisbane City</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>EP Trewern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Scott House</td>
<td>2 Scott Street</td>
<td>Kangaroo Point</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous cement sheeting</td>
<td>Elina Mottram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Principal sources: BCC, City Architect’s Department, Registers of Building Approvals, 1904-1925; ABJQ tender notices and reports 1922-1925; weekly reports on Brisbane building activity published in the Daily Mail and Brisbane Courier.
### 11. Statistical overview: Brisbane City Council building approvals for multiple-dwelling buildings (new and conversions), 1920-1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flats</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convert to flats</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additions or alterations flats</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenements, apartments, residential</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert to tenements, apartments, residential</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions or alterations tenements, apartments, residential</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 Derived from surviving Brisbane City Council building approvals. Unfortunately, these statistics do not provide a complete record of the number of new flat and tenement developments undertaken in metropolitan Brisbane between the wars. Prior to 1 October 1925, when Greater Brisbane became an administrative reality, registers of building approvals pertain only to the Brisbane central business district and inner suburbs of Spring Hill, Kangaroo Point, Fortitude Valley, New Farm, Teneriffe, Newstead, Bowen Hills and Petrie Terrace. Also, there are substantial gaps in the registers during the 1930s: September-December 1934; January-December 1935, April-December 1937, and January-December 1939.

A further difficulty in using these registers is the variation in terminology when approvals were recorded. While most of the larger purpose-built flats were identified unambiguously, the same could not be said of the house conversions: some were recorded as ‘convert to flats’; others as ‘alterations flats’ or ‘additions flats’, which could encompass anything from installation of a new water closet to additional flats on the site. Flats associated with offices or commercial premises often are not identified. Some discrepancy in use of the terms ‘tenement’, ‘apartment’ and ‘residential’ was noted. Also problematic was the interchanging use of the terms ‘pair of flats’, ‘flats (2)’, ‘pair of semi-detached dwellings’ and ‘maisonettes’. For the purposes of quantification, they are all considered to be flats.

Although contemporary commentators estimated that thousands of Brisbane homes were converted into multiple-occupancy dwellings during the interwar period, the number of house conversions recorded in the registers bears no relationship to this on-ground observation, suggesting either that large numbers of conversions were made by owners without Council approval, or that these permissions were recorded in the registers simply as ‘alterations’ or ‘additions’ with no indication as to whether this pertained to flat or tenement construction.
### Appendix 12

**Caretaker flats identified in Brisbane central business district, 1920-1939.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>State Government Insurance Office Building (1st)</td>
<td>cnr George &amp; Elizabeth</td>
<td>roof-top</td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat associated with Radio Station 4QG, which from early 1926 operated from a studio constructed on the flat roof of the SGIO Building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>T &amp; G Building</td>
<td>cnr Queen &amp; Albert</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Ascot Chambers</td>
<td>cnr Queen &amp; Edward</td>
<td>top floor</td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Sutton House</td>
<td>George Street</td>
<td>top floor</td>
<td>A small building of three storeys and basement, incorporating an upper floor residential flat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Brisbane City Hall</td>
<td>cnr Adelaide &amp; Albert</td>
<td>top floor</td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat – ‘under the shadow of the clock tower’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Colonial Mutual Life Bldg</td>
<td>Queen Street, next GPO</td>
<td>top floor</td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat – ‘roof-top garden with bush-house, fish pond and aviaries’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>State Government Insurance Office Building (2nd)</td>
<td>cnr Adelaide &amp; Edward</td>
<td>roof-top</td>
<td>Caretaker’s flat – 5-roomed bungalow – ‘spacious lounge, tastefully furnished bedrooms, and a bathroom and kitchen that are the last word in domestic equipment’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

46 Helen Bennett, Maureen Lillie and Bronwyn Price, *Brisbane’s Commercial Heritage 1900-1940: three walking tours of the CBD*, (BHG Tour no.23), Brisbane: BHG, 2002; BCC, building approval no.16547 (25 July 1928); *Sunday Mail*, 25 February 1934, p24.
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Interpreting the modern: Flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941

living in multiple-occupancy dwellings in interwar Brisbane

in two volumes

1. Introduction, Chapters, Appendices 1-12 and Bibliography
2. Appendix 13

Helen Bennett
School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Griffith University, Nathan
Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Submission date: 31 December 2010
Interpreting the modern: Flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941

Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.
This appendix provides a list of blocks of flats, flats and shops, pairs of flats, maisonettes, residential and tenement buildings identified during the course of the study, as having been purpose-designed and erected in the period 1920-1941. House conversions are not normally included, unless associated with an additional block of purpose-built flats, or where it has not been possibly to rule out the possibility that the development was a conversion.

References to other flat developments were located, but if they have not been confirmed either through documentary evidence or site inspection, they have not been included in the following spreadsheets. Most of the larger blocks of Brisbane flats have been identified, other than in areas of recent, intensive urban renewal, such as Kangaroo Point, Stanley Street at South Brisbane in the vicinity of the Queensland Cultural Centre, and along Coronation Drive at Milton. It has been especially difficult to locate on the ground many maisonettes and pairs of flats, where the reference has been insufficient. However, a good number have been identified and provide evidence of the range of forms and quality of construction of this very popular type of residential accommodation in the interwar years and early 1940s.

The findings in the spreadsheets are based on information derived from Brisbane City Council archival records – especially the registers of building approvals for the period 1904-1941, licensing files for multiple-dwelling buildings, and the minutes of Council meetings; as well as from tender notices, reports and promotional articles in contemporary newspapers and journals, principally the Architectural and Building Journal of Queensland, 1922-1944; Brisbane Courier, 1919-1933; Building, 1919-1941; Courier-Mail, 1933-1959; Daily Mail, 1919-1932; Queenslander, 1930-1932; Sunday Mail, 1922-1941; and Telegraph, 1930-1941.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, the photographs are the work of the author over the course of the study.
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

The spreadsheets are arranged alphabetically by suburb or suburban grouping as follows:

- Albion
- Annerley
- Ascot
- Ashgrove
- Auchenflower
- Bowen Hills
- Buranda
- City
- Clayfield
- Coorparoo-Greenslopes-Holland Park
- Dutton Park
- East Brisbane
- Fortitude Valley
- Hamilton
- Highgate Hill
- Kangaroo Point
- Lutwyche
- Milton
- New Farm-Teneriffe
- Paddington
- Petrie Terrace
- Red Hill
- South Brisbane
- Spring Hill
- Toowong
- West End-Hill End
- Windsor
- Wooloowin

Within each suburb, the places are arranged chronologically by year of completion.

In each record, the number of storeys and flats are those identified as having existed at completion. If, for example, a block of four flats has been converted into six flats at a later date, then the original number only is recorded.
### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status 1.12.10</th>
<th>E, D = extant, demolished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr McCasker's Flats</td>
<td>48 A&amp;B Mawarra St (formerly Albion St)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meerawa &amp; Yearinga</td>
<td>12 Lapraik St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>H. Crouch</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bradley's Flats</td>
<td>159 Albion Rd</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>E. Bradley</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.**

1. PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
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<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Ashfield</td>
<td>262 Annerley Rd (S cnr Brisbane St)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Cavanagh &amp; Cavanagh</td>
<td>H. Blase</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Miss Hornick’s Flats</td>
<td>9 Emperor St</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Glorimar Court</td>
<td>10 Rusk St (N cnr Brisbane St)</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Fairfield Lodge</td>
<td>270 Annerley Rd (N cnr Carville St)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.T. Ryan (1938) N.G. Stewart (1963 addition)</td>
<td>A.A. Newell (1938)</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Conley’s Flats</td>
<td>30 Tamar St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>J.L. Conley</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Bosworth’s Maisonettes</td>
<td>34 Young St</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>R. Bosworth</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<th>Material</th>
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<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Cole’s Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>39 Young St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>R. Bosworth &amp; Sons</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yaralla</td>
<td></td>
<td>13 Brisbane St</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R. Bosworth &amp; Sons</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charl-Cliff</td>
<td></td>
<td>285 Ipswich Rd (N cnr Brisbane St)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>R. Bosworth &amp; Sons</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mena</td>
<td></td>
<td>12-14 St Kilda Place</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R. Bosworth &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### ASCOT

|       | Flats & Shops | 122 Racecourse Rd | 1929? | FS | 2 | 2 | Brick | Hall & Prentice | E |

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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential units identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<th>Builder</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flats &amp; Shops</td>
<td>121 Racecourse Rd</td>
<td>1930s FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thomas Jones' Maisonettes</td>
<td>14 Henry St</td>
<td>1934 M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>H. Driver</td>
<td>C.H. Schubert</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agincourt</td>
<td>22 Henry St</td>
<td>1935 F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.T. Ryan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mrs Sparkes' Maisonettes</td>
<td>177 Lancaster Rd</td>
<td>1938 M</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>H. Driver</td>
<td>W.H. Morse</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Barnes' Maisonettes</td>
<td>31 Ascot St</td>
<td>1938 M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>C.P. Hornick</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Stephen's Flats</td>
<td>33 Alexandra Rd</td>
<td>1939 F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>D.F.W. Roberts</td>
<td>D</td>
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<th>Builder</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>353 Waterworks Rd</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>Fisher &amp; Tesch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dunrobin</td>
<td></td>
<td>24-26 Girraween Grove</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>R. Muller</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miss Davies' Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>220 A&amp;B Coopers Camp Rd</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>R.J. Bradley</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nara &amp; Oban</td>
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<td>263 Waterworks Rd</td>
<td>1938c</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; Fibrous-cement</td>
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<td>T. Philip's Maisonettes</td>
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<td>28 Acacia Dve</td>
<td>1939c</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Red Roofs</td>
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<td>8 Stewart Place</td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; Fibrous-cement</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>AUCHENFLOWER</td>
<td>Mrs Joyce’s Flats</td>
<td>24 Dunmore Tce</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E. Miller</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mineda</td>
<td>45 Chasely St (E cnr Lang Pde)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3?</td>
<td>G. Osbaldiston</td>
<td>L.B. De Grant</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>6 Lima St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>J.M. Collin</td>
<td>S. Noyes</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>BOWEN HILLS</td>
<td>York House</td>
<td>78 Breakfast Creek Rd</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>J.H. Knight</td>
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<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Breakfast Creek Rd</td>
<td>1924</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Breakfast Creek Rd</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>F.H. Salmon</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Kenney's Shop &amp; Flats</td>
<td>65 Abbotsford Rd (S cnr Folkestone St)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Carlyle Bros</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Alliston</td>
<td>43 Jordan Tce (W cnr Roche Ave)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>W. Shardlow</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential units identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<td>BOWEN HILLS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Avoca</td>
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<td>16-18 Breakfast Creek Rd</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>Taishan</td>
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<td>23 Jordan Tce</td>
<td>1936</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Cavanagh &amp; Cavanagh</td>
<td>L. Hammer</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strathmore</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 Roche Ave</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BURANDA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Duthie's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 Maynard St</td>
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<td>PF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>Bell &amp; Son</td>
<td>E</td>
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# Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<tr>
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<td>Garden Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>72-74 George St</td>
<td>1924 &amp; 1925</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.P. Trewern</td>
<td>C. Crowther &amp; Sons</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>No image available</td>
<td>Atcherley House</td>
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<td>513-515 Queen St (NE cnr Adelaide St)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>Atkinson &amp; Conrad</td>
<td>J. &amp; E.L. (or D.L.) Rees</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>456 Upper Roma St</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.T. Ryan</td>
<td>M. Keegan</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>No image available</td>
<td>Eton Private Hotel</td>
<td>Westminster Private Hotel</td>
<td>Wharf and Adelaide Sts (N cnr)</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Atkinson, Powell &amp; Conrad</td>
<td>J. Hutchinson</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Akuna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>328 Upper Roma St</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>D.F.C. Ham</td>
<td>Old Building &amp; Construction Co. Pty Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
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<td>384 Upper Roma St</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
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## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<tr>
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<td><strong>Oxley Court</strong></td>
<td>Oxley Court Holiday Units, Spot Holiday Units</td>
<td>293 North Quay (and May St)</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Brick</td>
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<td>J. Hutchinson</td>
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<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Hotel Canberra</strong></td>
<td>Canberra Private Hotel</td>
<td>Ann St (W cnr Edward St)</td>
<td>1929 &amp; 1932c</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>A.E. Brookes</td>
<td>B. Cunningham</td>
<td>D</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Image</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<th>Builder</th>
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<th>D = demolished</th>
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<td>Miss Propsting's Flats</td>
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<td>86 Wagner Rd</td>
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<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>A.J. Liddle &amp; Sons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bellevue Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Bonney Ave</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>T. Phil [or Mr C.L. Baker?]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hampton Court</td>
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<td>436 Sandgate Road (cnr Ford St)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>E.J.A. Weller</td>
<td>C.L. Baker</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coraki Court</td>
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<td>464 Sandgate Rd</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>Constructors Pty Ltd</td>
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Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<td>14 Butler St</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>D.F.W. Roberts</td>
<td>S. Noyes</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eton</td>
<td></td>
<td>28 Drane St</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Heindorf's Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>518-520 Sandgate Rd</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>A. Johansen</td>
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<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gartness</td>
<td></td>
<td>575 Sandgate Rd</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G.C. Oxnam's Flats</td>
<td>Ivondale?</td>
<td>838-842 Sandgate Rd</td>
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<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Christensen &amp; Cameron</td>
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### Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

**Type:** Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<td>24 Marsden St</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Plant &amp; Voller</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cupka's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>7-9 Victoria Pde</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>J. Cupka</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Bolton's Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Haig St</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>P.E.J. Tesch</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Lupton's Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 &amp; 16A Marsden St</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>A.B. Lupton</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bowden's Maisonettes</td>
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<td>10 Victoria St</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Conrad &amp; Gargett</td>
<td>R. Lucas</td>
<td>E</td>
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### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

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<th>Image</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Young’s Flats &amp; Shops?</td>
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<td>936 Logan Road (Holland Park)</td>
<td>1937?</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>S.W. Prior?</td>
<td>A. Cutts?</td>
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<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Concrete?</td>
<td>B. Bosworth &amp; Sons (1941 additions)</td>
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<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Hinda</td>
<td>Rialto Lodge</td>
<td>30 Rialto St (Coorparoo)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>T. Clark/Clarke</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Melville’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>395 Cavendish Rd (Coorparoo)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E.W. Skyring</td>
<td>E</td>
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## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<th>Image</th>
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<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Filma</td>
<td>DUTTON PARK</td>
<td>2 Pope St (SE cnr Gladstone Rd)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>R. Coutts &amp; Sons</td>
<td>C.G.A. Day</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inisfallen</td>
<td></td>
<td>210 Gladstone Rd (W cnr Deighton St)</td>
<td>1935c</td>
<td>FS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td>Henley</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Lamington St (S cnr Wahcumba St)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>Harmer</td>
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<td>281 Gladstone Rd</td>
<td>1938c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>?E.P. Trewern</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davis' Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>220-222 Gladstone Rd</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>4?</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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### EAST BRISBANE

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<td>Lahey's Corner</td>
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<td>Stanley St East (NW cnr Lisburn (earlier King) St)</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>T.B.M. Wightman</td>
<td>Cheesman &amp; Bull</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
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PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
## Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montana</td>
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<td>29 Overend St (SW cnr Lisburn St)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Linton</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>24-38 Duncan St</td>
<td>1922</td>
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<td>F.R. Hall, Hennessey &amp; Hennessey</td>
<td>G.H. Turner</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>G.H. Turner</td>
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<td>33 Amelia St</td>
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<td>Donegal [1]</td>
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<td>426 St Paul’s Tce (NE cnr Baxter St)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.E. Plant</td>
<td>C.G.A. Day</td>
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**Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.**

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### Appendix 13
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<td>Bulolo</td>
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<td>9 McLachlan St</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hennessey &amp; Hennessey</td>
<td>P.H. Turner &amp; Co. Pty Ltd</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>81-85 McLachlan St</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>A.E. Griffiths' Building</td>
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<td>606-608 Wickham St</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ashlar Bldg &amp; Construction Co.</td>
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<td>Barry Pde</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>Constructors Pty Ltd</td>
<td>D</td>
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**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentialss identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td></td>
<td>508 Brunswick St</td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Axan" /></td>
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<td>32 Ivory St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>A.C. Ebeling</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Brunswick Court" /></td>
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<td>1940</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>H.T. Sydes</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Apia" /></td>
<td>Apia</td>
<td></td>
<td>501 Brunswick St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; redner</td>
<td>Wood, Parnwell &amp; Wightman</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Baysmere" /></td>
<td>Baysmere</td>
<td></td>
<td>126 Bowen Tce (NE cnr Malt St)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>H. Sanham &amp; Son</td>
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**Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.**

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## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentsials identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
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<th>Type</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<tr>
<td>HAMILTON</td>
<td>Handsworth Villas</td>
<td></td>
<td>22-24 Arran Ave</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; stucco</td>
<td>F.H. Groth</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambus-kenneth</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Rossiter Pde (E cnr 31 Riverview Tce)</td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greystaines</td>
<td></td>
<td>240 Hamilton Rd (&amp; Eden Lane at rear)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>D.F. Roberts</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eversham</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 Quarry St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>M.H. Rylance</td>
<td>J. Southern</td>
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# Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 York St (cnr 2 Day St)</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empire</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 Crescent Rd</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>H.T. Sydes</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R.E. Tear’s Flats (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Toorak Rd</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>S. Levitt</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R.E. Tear’s Flats (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 Day St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>PF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>S. Levitt</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Murphy’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>250 Kingsford Smith Dve</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Cullen &amp; Eagan</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Portrate’s Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>39 Rossiter Pde (E cnr 14 Lexington Tce)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>A. Portrate</td>
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### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>Fisher &amp; Tesch</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>Eden Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>71 Hillside Crescent (N cnr Eden Lane)</td>
<td>1940c</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
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<td>132 Kingsford Smith Dve</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>F.E. Crane</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>E.P. Trewern</td>
<td>A.R. Crick</td>
<td>E</td>
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Appendix 13
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<th>Image</th>
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<td>25-27 Riverview Tce</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>L.S. Griffiths in office of Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>Nagel &amp; Co.</td>
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<td>The Glen</td>
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<td>24 York St</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>S. Conwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>Alton Place</td>
<td>26 Toorak Rd</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
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<td>392 Kingsford Smith Dve (formerly Hamilton Rd)</td>
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<td>G. Mitchell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>33 Racecourse Rd (S cnr Allen St)</td>
<td>1941</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R.W. Havill</td>
<td>E</td>
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<th>Image</th>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>A. Strachan</td>
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<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>J. Alvey’s maisonsettes</td>
<td>134-136 Dornoch Tce</td>
<td>1930c</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L.G. Alvey</td>
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<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Merstham</strong></td>
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<td>109-111 Gladstone Rd (N cnr Hazelwood St)</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>FS</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Highview</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>189 Dornoch Tce</td>
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<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
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<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>18 Appel St</td>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Hampstead Court</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>59 Hampstead Rd (S cnr Hove St)</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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## Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
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<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morelinn</td>
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<td>24 Blakeney St</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.F. Morey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earls Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>31 Gladstone Rd (cnr Pollux St)</td>
<td>1937c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>R. Bosworth</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green Gables</td>
<td></td>
<td>32 Appel St</td>
<td>1937</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G.J. Hoare &amp; Sons</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dolbun</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 Hampstead Rd (cnr 3 Westbourne St)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>C.H. Griffin?</td>
<td>A. Brissaw</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carmel Court</td>
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<td>163-165 Vulture St (W cnr Hampstead Rd)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
<td>H. Leahy</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs Fuller's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>20 A&amp;B Prospect Tce</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>D.F.W. Roberts</td>
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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.

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### Appendix 13

#### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Regina Court</td>
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<td>58 Dornoch Tce (E cnr Katrine St)</td>
<td>1939</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
<td>W.R. Provan</td>
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<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs Wright's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 Westbourne St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; Fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E.J.A. Weller</td>
<td>W. Lesmond</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs Cowlishaw’s Flats</td>
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<td>27 Westbourne St</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>B. Hollingsworth</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Misses Stedman’s maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>35-37 Westbourne St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; timber</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>C.H. Schubert</td>
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</table>

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**Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.**

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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R.L. Salmon's Flats</td>
<td>Chez Madeline</td>
<td>33 Franklin St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; Fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R.L. Salmon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Estia Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 Sexton St</td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; Fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Blackburn &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>L. Noskoff</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marlet</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 Westbourne St</td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Job &amp; Collin</td>
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</table>
## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentials identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<td></td>
<td>9 Pixley St</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brick &amp; timber</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E. Mottram</td>
<td>W.B. Johnstone</td>
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<tr>
<td>No image available</td>
<td>Oliver Lodge</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 Pixley St</td>
<td>1926c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>J.H. Burley</td>
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<tr>
<td>No image available</td>
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<td>Arubial Flats</td>
<td>25 Pixley St</td>
<td>1926c</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>J. Schoenwald</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement?</td>
<td>F. Hohnke</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Chale" /></td>
<td>Chale</td>
<td></td>
<td>354 Main Street (near cnr Caims St)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<td><img src="Cliffside" alt="image" /></td>
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<td>76 Lower River Terrace</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>R.M. Wilson</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
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<td>![image](Hosking's Flats)</td>
<td>Hosking's Flats</td>
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<td>659 Main St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R. Bosworth &amp; Sons</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>![image](Naghi's Maisonettes)</td>
<td>Naghi's Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>765 Main St (S cnr Burke Lane)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Cavanagh &amp; Cavanagh</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="Royston" alt="image" /></td>
<td>Royston</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 River Tce</td>
<td>1941c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
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<tr>
<td>![image](No image available)</td>
<td>Musgrave's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>502 Main St (N cnr Quinton St)</td>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>PF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>S. Conwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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## Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential buildings identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
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<td>44 High St</td>
<td>1940</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>Blackburn &amp; Gzell</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MILTON</td>
<td>Glengranton</td>
<td>Miss Bulcock's Flats</td>
<td>17 Castlemaine St</td>
<td>1932c</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>E. Kirby</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandige</td>
<td>Miss Bulcock's Flats</td>
<td>13 Wight St</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Phillips</td>
<td>A.E. Hill &amp; Brown</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kobe &amp; Moji</td>
<td></td>
<td>9-11 Baroona Rd</td>
<td>1935c</td>
<td>PF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
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### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Parkeston Flats</td>
<td>23 Baroona Rd</td>
<td>1935c</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Eltosh</td>
<td>13-15 Baroona Rd</td>
<td>1936c</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Clark's Flats</td>
<td>17-19 Baroona Road</td>
<td>1937c</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Daventry &amp; Banavie</td>
<td>33 Baroona Rd</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E. Crawford</td>
<td>E. Crawford</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs McIntosh’s Flats</td>
<td>275 Milton Rd</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Clark's Maisonettes</td>
<td>35 Baroona Rd</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>E.R. Cramphorn</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
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<th>Builder</th>
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<td>Simla</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 Balfour St</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
<td>F.J. Corbett</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Langshaw House</td>
<td>Langshaw Flats, The Embassy</td>
<td>5 Langshaw St</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
<td>T. Keenan</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evansleigh</td>
<td>KD Flats; Lindisfarne Court</td>
<td>116 Merthyr Rd (SW cnr Charles St)</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>day labour</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monaise</td>
<td></td>
<td>299 Bowen Tce</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Frankston</td>
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<td>23 Moray St</td>
<td>1923c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>R. Chipp (1923) E. Mottram (1924)</td>
<td>F.J. Corbett</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>14 Abbott St &amp; 38 Merthyr Rd</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>C.H. Davis</td>
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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
# Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>J.H. Knight</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clifford’s Flats &amp; Shops</td>
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<td>Merthyr Rd (N cnr Hawthorne St)</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>E.P. Trewern</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foxthorn Court</td>
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<td>125-127 Moreton St</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Face brick</td>
<td>Cavanagh &amp; Cavanagh</td>
<td>A.E. Hill</td>
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<td>291 Bowen Tce</td>
<td>1927</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
<td>A.E. Hill</td>
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### NEW FARM-TENERIFFE

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<td>J.H. Burley (1927) Blackburne &amp; Gzell (1937)</td>
<td>(1) C.A. Roper (2) Fisher &amp; Tesch</td>
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<td>J. Hutchinson</td>
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<td>308 Harcourt St (Teneriffe)</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>2 4</td>
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<td>Glenlyon, Monroe</td>
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<td>2 10</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Van Kool &amp; Lucas</td>
<td>M.J. Lawrie</td>
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<td><img src="image5" alt="Roseville" /></td>
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<td>McBride</td>
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<td>A.F. Ulrick</td>
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Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)
## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

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<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>J.T. Ford</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>18 Moray St</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>J.H. Burley</td>
<td>Warendorp &amp; Pipe</td>
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<td>H. Crouch</td>
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<td>Hamel</td>
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<td>768 Brunswick St (NW cnr Browne St)</td>
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<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>J.H. Davies</td>
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### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>38 Elystan Rd</td>
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<td>G.E. Day &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>74 Merthyr Rd (SW cnr Hazel [formerly Ella] St)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
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<td>F. Havill</td>
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<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Coronet Court</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>M. Strickland</td>
<td>T. Larking &amp; Wightman (brickwork)</td>
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<td>58 Merthyr Rd</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>C. King</td>
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**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>J. Thomas</td>
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<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Addison &amp; Macdonald</td>
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<td>10 Julius St</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<td>40 Moray St</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>H. Crouch</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>J.D. MacDonald</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>E.W. Mazlin / R.V. Brady</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Brick, timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
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<td>Julius Lodge</td>
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<td>Brick, timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
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## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>Brick &amp; timber</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
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### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentials identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

**Type:** Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>P.J. Beir</td>
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<td>B.J. Bartlett</td>
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<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>P. Warendorp</td>
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Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

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<td>Addison &amp; Macdonald, &amp; J.J. Ahern</td>
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<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs MacKenzie's Flats</td>
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<td>25 Abbott St</td>
<td>1938</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
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<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Braemar</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>S. Noyes</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mansted House</td>
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<td>81 Merthyr Rd &amp; 888-890 Brunswick St</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
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Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>S. Lloyd</td>
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<td>Mrs Kent’s Maisonettes</td>
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<td>80-82 Oxlade Dve</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; stucco</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>84 Oxlade Drive</td>
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<td>4</td>
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<td>Bennie Bros</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
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<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>J.D. MacDonald's Maisonettes (2)</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
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<td>Wood &amp; Pamwell</td>
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*flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.*

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Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

| Image | Place name   | Other names | Address                  | Year completed | Type | No. storeys | No. flats | Material                        | Architect/Designer | Builder        | Status |  |
|-------|--------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|------|-------------|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------|  |
|       | Radna Hall   |             | 844 Brunswick St         | 1941           | F    | 1           | 8        | Timber, fibrous-cement & stucco | J. Carlyle        | E              |        |  |
|       | Hartle Court |             | 850 Brunswick St         | 1941           | F    | 2           | 6        | Brick                           | A.W.F. Bligh      | A. Hart        | E      |  |
|       | Chegwyn's Flats |          | 999 Brunswick St         | 1941           | F    | 2           | 3        | Brick & concrete                | Plant & Voller    | G. Heaven      | E      |  |
|       | Adelea       |             | 18 Llewellyn St          | 1941           | F    | 2           | 4        | Brick                           | A.W.F. Bligh      | A.J. Liddle & Son | E      |  |
|       | Babbitt Court|             | 13 Merthyr Rd & 162 Moray St (E cnr Moray St) | 1941 | F    | 2           | 3        | Brick                           | F.L. Cullen       | G. Major       | E      |  |

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### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

| Image | Place name | Other names | Address       | Year completed | Type | No. storeys | No. flats | Material        | Architect/ Designer | Builder       | Status |  
|-------|------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|--------|-------|
|       | Victory Court |             | 15 Merthyr Rd | 1941          | F    | 2           | 4         | Brick           | F.L. Cullen          | G. Major     | E      |
|       | Bronte      |             | 37 Moray Street | 1941         | F    | 2           | 4         | Brick           |                      | R. Woods     | E      |
|       | Clifton Court |            | 140 Moray Street | 1941        | F    | 2           | 16        | Brick           | C.L. Baker           | E            |
|       | Hasely Court |            | 134-136 Moray St | 1941       | F    | 2           | 8         | Brick           | C.L. Baker           | E            |
|       | Evandi      |             | 14-16 Mountford Rd | 1941      | PF   | 1           | 2         | Timber & stucco | R. Bosworth & Sons   | E            |
|       | Monte Cassino |           | 10 Villiers St  | 1941        | F    | 2           | 3         | Brick           | F.L. Cullen          | J. Cupka    | E      |
## Appendix 13

### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential apartments identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Moranne" /></td>
<td>Moranne</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 McGregor Tce</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>G.J. Hoare &amp; Sons</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Marven House" /></td>
<td>Marven House</td>
<td></td>
<td>225 Given Tce (W cnr Martha St)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Atkinson &amp; Conrad</td>
<td>Baxter &amp; Hargreaves</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Miss Morey's Flats" /></td>
<td>Miss Morey's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>286 Given Tce</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="E.F. Morey's Flats" /></td>
<td>E.F. Morey's Flats</td>
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<td>290 Given Tce</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E.F. Morey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PETRIE TERRACE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PETRIE TERRACE</td>
<td>Shawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>172 Petrie Terrace</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>S. Noyes</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETRIE TERRACE</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>118 Petrie Tce</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PETRIE TERRACE</td>
<td>Warren Lodge</td>
<td></td>
<td>294 Petrie Tce</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.F. Morey</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>RED HILL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED HILL</td>
<td>Terrace House</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-11 Enoggera Tce</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Hall &amp; Prentice</td>
<td>A.E. Hill</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RED HILL</td>
<td>Hutchinson's Flats &amp; Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>101-109 Musgrave Rd</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>J.J. Hutchinson</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

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### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys (No. flats)</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Ventnor</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 Edmonstone St (cnr Russell St)</td>
<td>1922c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Stanley</td>
<td></td>
<td>? 10 Stanley Street (West)</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Kia-ora</td>
<td></td>
<td>84-90 Montague Rd (cnr Boundary St)</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>J.H. Knight</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>St Helier</td>
<td></td>
<td>279 Grey St</td>
<td>1930, 1932</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.H. Griffin</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Collins' Flats</td>
<td>'311'; Chorlton Villa</td>
<td>311-315 Vulture St (earlier 299 Vulture St)</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>W. Dowall</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>San Remo</td>
<td></td>
<td>238-240 Vulture St</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E.P. Trewern, Tealby &amp; Crick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>MarcFran, Johannie, Rolyat, Pendlebury, Elbon &amp; Cimcves</td>
<td></td>
<td>38-46 Browning St &amp; 27 Besant St</td>
<td>1935c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
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Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musgrave Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>185 Vulture Street</td>
<td>1935c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raven Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>68 Grey St</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>H. Crouch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raven Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>(cnr Fish Lane)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nechoma Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>71 Annerley Rd</td>
<td>1936c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nechoma Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>(S cnr Gloucester St)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hollington</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 Browning St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stucco</td>
<td>W.H. Morse</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hollington</td>
<td></td>
<td>(cnr Fish Lane)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Royal Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>28 Browning St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
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<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Telegrapth, 7 April 1936, p8.</td>
<td>Clarence Court</td>
<td>2-6 Clarence Street (N cnr Annerley Rd)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R. Coutts &amp; Sons</td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Serlodi</td>
<td>1983 (JCL 81372)</td>
<td>269 Grey St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Gwylan</td>
<td>27-31 O'Connell St (W cnr Vulture St)</td>
<td>1936+ addition</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G.J. Hoare &amp; Son</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Raymond Court</td>
<td>Raymond Tce</td>
<td>1936</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Donegar</td>
<td>63 Browning St</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>? E.T. Ryan</td>
<td>C.J. Hoare &amp; Son</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

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### Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential units identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tribune</td>
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<td>80 Tribune St</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everston Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Water St East (N cnr Stanley St)</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>T. Wooliam</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Acton</td>
<td></td>
<td>159-161 Vulture St</td>
<td>1938c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>day labour</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Dell-Dee (possibly a house conversion?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>187 Vulture Street</td>
<td>1938c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Samootin's Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>34 Clarence St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>C.G. Barnes</td>
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<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Merivale</td>
<td></td>
<td>105 Melbourne St (W cnr Merivale St)</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>H. Ryan</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Elbing</td>
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<td>37 Peel St</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrau</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Edmonstone St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R. Gailey jnr</td>
<td>H.D. Opperman</td>
<td>D</td>
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</table>

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**Brisbane metropolitan area:** Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<td>![Image]</td>
<td>Stafford House addition?</td>
<td></td>
<td>? 60 Stanley St</td>
<td>1940c</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>A.E. Crebert?</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>Corio</td>
<td></td>
<td>107 Melbourne St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>H. Sanham</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
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<td>![Image]</td>
<td>Tenby</td>
<td></td>
<td>36 Water Street East</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>E.J.A. Weller</td>
<td>J. Hutchinson</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Image]</td>
<td>Monsour’s Flats &amp; Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>127-133 Melbourne St &amp; 27 Cordelia St</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Lucas &amp; Cummings</td>
<td>J.W. Green</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>![Image]</td>
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**Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.**

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Place name</th>
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<td>Morella, Carinyah, Lumtah &amp; Neerim</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>T.B.M. Wightman</td>
<td>Cheesman &amp; Bull</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Guildford Court</td>
<td>Pink Palace</td>
<td>425 Wickham Tce</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>S.W. Prior</td>
<td>J. Knight</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Shirley-Dene</td>
<td></td>
<td>461 Gregory Tce (S cnr Brunswick St)</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>J.R. Figgis</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Atkinson &amp; Conrad</td>
<td>W. Taylor</td>
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<td>![Image](Astor Private Hotel)</td>
<td>Astor Private Hotel</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>D.E. Wheeldon</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="Yulite" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Yulite</td>
<td>59 Leichhardt St (E cnr Birley St)</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>? S.W. Prior</td>
<td>D.E. Wheeldon</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="Sandringham" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Sandringham Boarding House; The Hill Terraces</td>
<td>131 Leichhardt St</td>
<td>1929-1933</td>
<td>R/F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>C.E. Plant (1929 residential) H. Driver (1933 convert to flats)</td>
<td>J.G. Hobbs (1929) E. Woolnough (1933)</td>
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Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.
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## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential building as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
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<th>Type</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Shandon</td>
<td>Annie’s Shandon Inn</td>
<td>405 Upper Edward St</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>D.E. Wheeldon</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cheyne</td>
<td></td>
<td>119 Gregory Tce (W cnr Bradley St)</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Chambers &amp; Ford</td>
<td>C. King</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrington</td>
<td>Carrington Clinic Vascular Surgery; Carrington Manor</td>
<td>445 Gregory Tce (SW cnr Wary St)</td>
<td>1934</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>T.C. Clarke</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td></td>
<td>18-22 St Paul’s Tce (SE cnr Isaac St)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F&amp;T</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>J. Beebe</td>
<td>A.B. Summers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vallima</td>
<td></td>
<td>44 St Paul’s Tce (SW cnr Union St)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>J.J. Ahern</td>
<td>W.H. Morse</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astor Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wharf St (also Leichhardt &amp; Henry Sts)</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>FS</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.E. Humphreys</td>
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### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentialis identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
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<th>Type</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Julius' Flats &amp; Shops</td>
<td>A. &amp; G. Vitale’s Flats &amp; Shops</td>
<td>484-486 Boundary St</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
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<td>Rutland Court</td>
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<td>183 Gregory Tce</td>
<td>1935</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
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<td>Chiverton</td>
<td>Callan</td>
<td>263 Gregory Tce (NE cnr Victoria St)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; stucco</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
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<td>Dunvegan</td>
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<td>391 Gregory Tce (NE cnr Park St)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Marford Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>226 Leichhardt St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
<td>H. Leahy</td>
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### Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<td>14</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>A.E. Brookes</td>
<td>C.G. Thiedeke</td>
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<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Fortescue St</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>H.F. Sydes</td>
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<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Arran House</td>
<td>27 Gregory Tce (S cnr Boundary Street)</td>
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<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>Gloria Court</td>
<td>86 Leichhardt Street</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>J.V.D. Coutts</td>
<td>Bell &amp; Sons</td>
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<td>Stanley Court</td>
<td>Dorchester Court, The Dorchester Inn</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>T. Larking</td>
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## Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

### Image

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<th>Image</th>
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<td>Brick &amp; concrete</td>
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<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
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<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Alexia House</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 Leichhardt St (E cnr North St) (formerly 451 Wickham Tce)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>G. &amp; R. Heaven</td>
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<td>Ardon</td>
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<td>83 Leichhardt St (W cnr Berry St)</td>
<td>1940c</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
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<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Torrington</td>
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<td>46 Torrington St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>H. &amp; E. Mergarde</td>
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<td>Yale</td>
<td>Acacia Inner City Inn</td>
<td>413 Upper Edward St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>A.W.F. Bligh</td>
<td>H. Leahy</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bow Hill</td>
<td>Leichhardt St</td>
<td>(E cnr Fortescue St)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>J. Riordan</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>309 Wickham Tce</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick &amp; concrete</td>
<td>G. Heaven</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>Carroll &amp; Vowles' Flats</td>
<td>18 Penrose St</td>
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>H.W. Kratzmann</td>
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### Appendix 13
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

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<table>
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<th>Image</th>
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<th>No. flats</th>
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<td>Sarann</td>
<td>Boundary St (N cnr End St)</td>
<td>1927c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>B.J. Bartlett</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Gillies’ Maisonettes</td>
<td>48 Ryan St &amp; 12 Morry St (Hill End)</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>R.C. Nowland</td>
<td>E. Reid</td>
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<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Minima Court</td>
<td>11 Whynot St</td>
<td>1935c</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Moore’s Flats</td>
<td>29 Harriett St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>J. Wincup</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Wilton</td>
<td>37 Victoria St (E cnr Beattie St)</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Wood &amp; Parnwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Drayton Court</td>
<td>31 Hardgrave Rd (SW cnr Vulture St)</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Addison &amp; Macdonald</td>
<td>S. Conwell</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Lumeah Court" /></td>
<td>Lumeah Court</td>
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<td>19 Whynot St</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.H. Griffin</td>
<td>J.G. Heeschen</td>
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<td><img src="image2" alt="Gray’s Flats" /></td>
<td>Gray’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>200 Boundary St (S cnr Baynes St)</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>M. Johnson</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Warringa" /></td>
<td>Warringa</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 Ganges St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Dolmar Towers" /></td>
<td>Dolmar Towers</td>
<td></td>
<td>82-84 Granville St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>J. Carlyle</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Halcyon" /></td>
<td>Halcyon</td>
<td></td>
<td>141 Hardgrave Rd</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Job &amp; Collin</td>
<td>E. Reid</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Hislop’s flats" /></td>
<td>Hislop’s flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 Thomas St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 13

**Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residencials identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.**

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Year completed</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/ Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Donald’s Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 Sussex St</td>
<td>1939c</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harding Court</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Ambleside St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Blackburne &amp; Gzell</td>
<td>E. Paget</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westella</td>
<td></td>
<td>141 Boundary St &amp; 6 Jane St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>R &amp; FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>G. Rae</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilstone (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>177 Hardgrave Rd</td>
<td>1940c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girdis’ Flats &amp; Shop</td>
<td></td>
<td>144 Boundary St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.A. Roper</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ionic &amp; Darby</td>
<td>Musgrave Park Hostel</td>
<td>196 Boundary St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>H.F. Marsh</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*Interpreting the modern: flatland in Brisbane 1920-1941.*

PhD submission, School of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Nathan, 31 December 2010.
# Appendix 13

Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residentials identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Other names</th>
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<th>Year completed</th>
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<th>No. storeys</th>
<th>No. flats</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Architect/Designer</th>
<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Erin</td>
<td></td>
<td>49-51 Hardgrave Rd (N cnr Skinner St)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber, fibrous-cement &amp; stucco</td>
<td>H.F. Marsh</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Berkeley’s Maisonettes</td>
<td></td>
<td>34 Jane St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>S. Conwell</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Alfleck’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 Vulture St</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>H.J. Wood</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Archibald</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 Archibald St</td>
<td>1941c</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>Ashlar Building &amp; Construction Company</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Aroney’s Shops &amp; Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>205 Boundary St (SW cnr Vulture St)</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>R.M. Wilson</td>
<td>C.E. Fenwick</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Davidson’s Maisonettes</td>
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<td>137-139 Hardgrave Rd</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>C.P. Hornick</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residential identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Hillstone (2)</td>
<td>173 Hardgrave Rd</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brick</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Figgis' Flats and Shop</td>
<td>139 Lutwyche Rd (N cnr Federation St)</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Timber</td>
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<td>J.R. Figgis</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Colwill Place</td>
<td>182-198 Albion Rd (S cnr Lutwyche Rd)</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>FS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
<td>S.W. Prior</td>
<td>J. Reid</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs Morey’s Flats</td>
<td>31-33 Campbell St</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>E.L. Morey</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Thondley</td>
<td>11 Le Geyt St</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick &amp; render</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image6.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Edge Hill</td>
<td>24 Grantson Street (formerly Rosemount St)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>R. Lucas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13
Brisbane metropolitan area: Purpose-built flats and residences identified as having been erected in the period 1920-1941.

Type: Block of flats (F), Flats & Shops (FS), Pair of Flats (PF), Maisonettes (M), Residential (R), Tenements (T)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
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<th>Builder</th>
<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Mrs Davidson’s Flats</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 Chalk St</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>PF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Timber &amp; fibrous-cement</td>
<td>Mrs J. Davidson</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Thompson’s Flats</td>
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<td>4 Hamley St (N cnr Adamson St)</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brick</td>
<td>R.W. Havill</td>
<td>E</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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