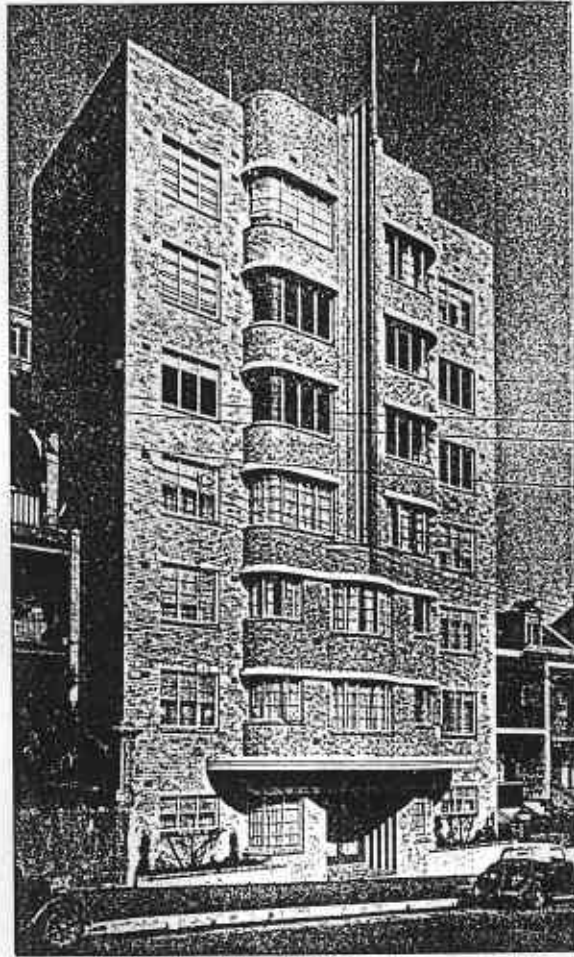


**MONT CLAIR,
347 LIVERPOOL STREET,
DARLINGHURST**



HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

Prepared By

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This Heritage Assessment report was commissioned by the Board of Directors of Mont Clair Home Units Pty Limited on 17 May 2000. Although the building has not been served with a Fire Safety Order from South Sydney Council, this is anticipated in the future. This report has been prepared so that the integrity of the building can be maintained in the event of the Order proceeding.

1.2 Objectives

The primary objective of this report is to make an assessment of the significance of Mont Clair as part of the environmental heritage of the municipality of South Sydney. The report is not intended to be a full Conservation Plan for the building and has not included policies for conservation. It serves only to establish the significance of the building and important spaces within it.

1.3 Methodology

The assessment of Mont Clair has been based on findings resulting from research into the building and its site and evaluation of the physical evidence provided by the building itself. Research was undertaken at the State Library of New South Wales, City of Sydney Archives, the Land Titles Office and South Sydney Council.

An inspection of the building was undertaken by the author of this report, Roy Lumby of Rod Howard Heritage Conservation Pty Ltd. At this time the nature of the building and its physical condition were noted. An inspection of comparable buildings in the locality of Darlinghurst was also undertaken to determine the historical and aesthetic relationships of Mont Clair within that locality.

The assessment follows the general guidelines set out in J S Kerr, *The Conservation Plan* (National Trust of Australia (NSW), third edition, 1990), the guidelines associated with the *Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance* (the Burra Charter), and the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, *Heritage Manual* (November 1996). Historical research was undertaken at the State Library of NSW, Land Titles Office and Kogarah Public Library.

1.4 Acknowledgments

The author thanks historian Wendy Thorp, Wayne Priddle and Peter Chadwick, Historical and Genealogical Officer at the Land Titles Office, for their generous assistance during the preparation of the report.

2.0 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

2.1 Early History

The land on which Mont Clair stands was once part of a land grant made to solicitor William Barker in 1853. It also appears to have had some associations with the estate of Edward Riley the younger, although the exact relationship has not been fully ascertained.

However, in the early nineteenth century it is possible that the site of Mont Clair contained a windmill. There were two timber post mills and a more substantial mill known as Clarkson's mill in close proximity to the site: "... it is probable that the two post-mills were roughly on where Liverpool Street now is, near Darley Street, while Clarkson's mill was a little south from this, perhaps near the end of Darley Place which runs off Darley Street between Liverpool and Burton Street"¹. Early maps and plans of the area certainly confirm the existence of a windmill on or near the site. Peter Lewis Bemis's copy of a Government chart "in the year 1829" shows the "New Gaol" (commenced in 1822) and to its north about five acres of land inscribed with the name Clarkson above "W Long Trustee to the Estate of J Hankinson". None of the streets that pass through the locality other than South Head Road (now Oxford Street) were shown². Bemis's 1844 Plan of the allotments that made up the subdivision of the Riley Estate shows that Forbes and Dowling (later Darley) Streets were in place, but that Liverpool Street only extended west as far as Bourke Street. What is termed the "Old Mill" is shown between Dowling and Forbes Streets, in line with Liverpool Street³. William Well's Plan of the City of Sydney from 1850 shows that Liverpool Street now extended past Victoria Street. The site of the future Mont Clair was shown as Lot E8, and at its north eastern corner was an allotment of land with a building indicated on it, one of the few shown in this part of Darlinghurst⁴.

On 16 September 1853 one acre and twelve perches, Lot E8 on Well's Plan, was granted to solicitor William Barker one of twenty eight parcels of land in Darlinghurst which he was granted at that time⁵. Barker was one of the trustees of the Riley Estate, and the grant was made as a result of a settlement made by Charles Riley in May 1844. As a result of this settlement the government annexed land that was not originally part of the Riley Estate and in some cases reformed grants

¹ Len Fox, *Old Sydney Windmills*, p.40.

² Mitchell Library (ML) ZM2 811.1811/1829/1. Hankinson's name also appears on Brownrigg's 1850 drawing of the parish of Darlinghurst (ML Z MAX 811.1/1850/1 Card 9).

³ ML ZMB2 811.1811/1844/1.

⁴ ML ZM4 811.17 gbbd/1850/1

⁵ LTO Register of Grants No. 105.

that had been made in the names of other people into the name of the Riley Estate⁶. In December 1858 two other trustees of Edward Riley the younger's estate, James Norton and William Clarke, sold the land on which Mont Clair was to eventually stand to Alexander Kennedy in December 1858. The indenture recording the change of title described the land as a portion of Block 8 of the compensation grant to the Riley Estate, appropriated to Edward Riley the younger⁷.

Riley's father, also called Edward, was of great significance in the history of Darlinghurst and its environs. He was a merchant and pastoralist, who has been described as the "high-living, gout-ridden, younger brother of the more illustrious Alexander Riley"⁸. Riley was born in London in 1784 and as a young man travelled to Calcutta to engage in colonial trading, where he dealt with shipments to canton and to New South Wales. He married there in 1805. On the death of his wife in 1810 Riley was seized with deep depression and, after several visits to New South Wales and remarriage he settled in Sydney in 1816. He rose quickly to become one of Sydney's most prominent citizens. He was granted land and made a magistrate and by 1818 was a director of the Bank of New South Wales. Riley also began what was only a partially successful attempt to reconstitute the large estate that had been accumulated by Commissary John Palmer. Palmer had arrived in Sydney Cove on the HMS Sirius, part of the First Fleet, in 1788 and was granted land by Governor Grose. It reached from Woolloomooloo Bay to present day Albion Street and from Hyde Park to Forbes Street. Between 1794 and 1800 Palmer accumulated a large estate of land that spread over much of what are now Woolloomooloo and Surry Hills. He was sacked from his position as Commissary general because of his support of Governor Bligh during the Rum Rebellion and returned to England to give evidence at inquiries prior to this he had taken Alexander Riley into partnership. Possibly to help protect his interests. Palmer's estate was sold off in 1814 to repay debts that he had accrued as a result of his absence⁹.

Edward Riley's business affairs began to fluctuate and the family moved to Woolloomooloo. During the early 1820s he travelled into the area around Yass and Goulburn to look for grazing land. However, Riley's unstable temperament was his undoing, and he took his own life on 21 February 1825 in the midst of a severe bout of depression¹⁰. His land was eventually divided amongst his seven children after protracted litigation and two conflicting wills. His son Edward was the recipient of land along Liverpool Street in Darlinghurst. Edward Riley the younger died on 24 June 1840.

⁶ Information received from Peter Chadwick.

⁷ LTO Book 236 No. 60.

⁸ Christopher Keating, *Surry Hills, the city's backyard*, p.19.

⁹ Keating, pp.16-17; Freda MacDonnell, *Before Kings Cross*, pp.3-5.

¹⁰ *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Volume 2, pp.381-382.

Alexander Kennedy was a dairyman, who was already living in Liverpool Street by 1850 in a stone house with a shingled roof¹¹. He occupied the land, living in a single storey stone house with three rooms and a shingled roof. He may well have run a dairy on the site, at least for a time, as there was a cow shed at the rear of the land in the first half of the 1860s¹². There may also have been the remains of the early windmill - a survey drawing dated 1865 shows a structure on the site with a configuration similar to that of the windmill shown on earlier drawings¹³. The modest dwelling must have formed a striking contrast with the substantial rows of three storey terrace houses that rose to the west and east of what was largely undeveloped land. Kennedy kept the land for many years until selling it to an architect, John Edward Kemp, at the end of 1881¹⁴, and appears to have remained as a tenant for the next couple of years. Kemp practiced in Sydney from 1890 to around 1912. By 1883 or 1884 Kennedy was no longer living on the site, and Kemp had the simple house demolished about this time - there are no buildings shown on the site on a plan of the area prepared by the Department of Lands in 1885¹⁵. John Kemp died on 17 February 1915 and left his property to his children. His son Charles purchased the still vacant land in Liverpool Street in 1918¹⁶. Charles Kemp mortgaged the land several times between 1918 and 1928. The last mortgagee was Ernest Claude Hamilton. Kemp died in 1930 or 1931 without the mortgage having been discharged, so in July 1934 Hamilton was given the power to enter into possession of the land and sell it¹⁷.

2.2 Mont Clair

At the end of 1936 the site was purchased from Hamilton by Nathaniel Freeman. Freeman was the managing director of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pty Ltd from 1925, and during the early 1940s was president of the Motion Picture Distributors Association and a member of the Department of Information's National Film Council¹⁸.

¹¹ City of Sydney Rate Books.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ City of Sydney Archive - Trigonometric Survey 1865.

¹⁴ Land Titles Office (LTO) Book 236 No. 61.

¹⁵ ML ZM SER 4 811.17/1 Sydney section II, 1885. The entry for 347 Liverpool Street in the 1883 City of Sydney Rate Book has the notation "pulled down" after a description of the house.

¹⁶ LTO Book 1136 No. 832.

¹⁷ LTO Book 1500 No. 161.

¹⁸ *Who's Who in Australia*, 11th edition, p.278. Freeman held the position of managing director of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pty Ltd until 1966.

In February 1937 title to the land was transferred to the Investments Company of Australia Limited. The following November it was mortgaged to the National Bank of Australasia¹⁹. An application for a new building was lodged with the Council of the City of Sydney by building contractors S D C Kennedy and Bird and approval was granted on 18 August 1937²⁰. The mortgage was discharged on 19 November 1938 and five days later the property was mortgaged to the National Mutual Life Association of Australasia Limited²¹.

It was designed by the architectural firm of Esmond B Wilshire & Hodges. Relatively little is known about this practice, although Esmond Wilshire was a sole practitioner in Sydney from about 1920 onwards, and the partnership appears to have been formed after the depression began to ease, around 1934²². During the 1930s the partnership designed a diverse range of buildings including Lessey's Garage in Riley Street, East Sydney (1934) and the Ophthalmic Hospital in Commonwealth Street, Sydney (1940)²³. At the time that Mont Clair was designed in 1937 the practice was involved in alterations to St James Flats in Stanley Street, Sydney, additions to a residence at Randwick, erection of a ballroom and alterations to the adjacent residence at Wahroonga, a new hanger for De Havilland Aircraft at Kingsford Smith airport, renovations to "premises" at Bondi, alterations to Sutherland Council Chambers, and the North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club²⁴.

Documentation prepared in the office of Wilshire & Hodges was completed by the beginning of June 1937. The building consisted of a ground floor and six upper levels. Planning on all levels was organised around a central corridor, and because of its location on a relatively narrow site in the middle of the block two light courts each on the eastern and western sides of the building provided light and air to apartments. When the building was completed there were palm trees and flagstones at their bases²⁵ Wilshire & Hodges' documents described the layout of Mont Clair as follows. On the ground floor a small porch off Liverpool Street led into a spacious vestibule, on either side of which was a bachelor flat containing a bed sitting room, kitchen and bathroom. In the middle of the building there was a one bedroom flat to the east of the corridor and a bachelor flat and boiler room

¹⁹ LTO Volume 4808 Folio 45. Rate books held at the City of Sydney archive confirm the ownership of the Investment Company of Australia, which is nominated in the rate books for 1942, 1947 and 1950.

²⁰ City of Sydney Archive.

²¹ LTO Volume 4808 Folio 45.

²² *Sands Sydney and suburban directory*, 1921 to 1932/33 editions.

²³ *Glass*, 1 December 1934, p.57; *Building*, 24 March 1941, pp.32-33.

²⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1937, 11 May 1937, 18 May 1937, 25 May 1937, 29 June 1937; *Building*, 24 November 1937, p.43.

²⁵ "The Modern Flat", *Building*, 24 August 1938, p.25

to its west. A store room was located at the southern end of the building. An open stair was located adjacent to the north eastern light court with a lift opposite, against the north western light court. An escape stair was located in the south western light court. There were seven flats on the first and second floors - three bachelor flats at the northern end, one bedroom flats in the middle and two bachelor flats at the southern end. However, a review of the completed building described the flats on the northern side of the building on these levels as the largest in the building (a claim that conflicts with what was actually built)²⁶. The third, fourth and fifth floors contained six flats each. These comprised two one bedroom flats at the northern end and in the middle, and two bachelor flats at the southern end of the building. The sixth floor was similar except that there was a two bedroom flat and a bachelor flat at the northern end of the building. There were two laundries and a drying area in the middle of the building and a "roof garden" on its northern side at roof level²⁷.

Mont Clair was favourably received upon completion in the architectural press. The Liverpool Street facade was described as "clear cut, modern, efficient and attractive, and the architects have been particularly successful in their handling of the colours and textures, the main brickwork being of a russet biscuit tone, which is a relief from the more generally accepted colouring". For the time the building was well equipped, indicating the standard that was expected in flats located in this part of Sydney: "As is almost mandatory in the modern flat of 1938, each unit is provided with refrigeration, hot water service and refuse destructor, while each flat is similarly served with direct inter-house communication with the manager's office and telephone, controlled by the general switchboard operator. The kitchens and bathrooms are attractively appointed, with electric stoves ... and all other conveniences"²⁸.

2.3 Context

During the 1920s there was a boom in flat construction throughout metropolitan Sydney. In this decade the local government area with the largest number of blocks of flats was the City of Sydney²⁹, which included residential precincts such as Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. Although the depression largely halted building activity in Sydney, after it began to ease there was another burst of building activity which lasted until the early years of World War II.

The construction of Mont Clair took place at a time when the building of flats in Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Kings Cross and Darlinghurst was being consolidated after the effects of the depression were easing. It was observed that "The activity in flat building in the City of Sydney and

²⁶ "On Continental Lines: "Mont Clair" Darlinghurst", *Decoration and Glass*, August 1938, p.12.

²⁷ City of Sydney Archive

²⁸ "The Modern Flat", p.25

²⁹ Richard Cardew, "Flats in Sydney: the thirty per cent solution?" in Jill Roe (editor) *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in urban and social history*, pp.73-74.

the nearer suburbs defies a suitable adjective. There has never at any time been such feverish building in the history of the city or the industry ... Closer in it is the bachelor and small family flat that is predominating. The minimum of accommodation in the most central position seems to be the desideratum³⁰.

There were a number of other prominent blocks of flats in the immediate locality of Mont Clair that were constructed during the interwar period. They include Hillcrest at 114 Burton Street which was built in the second half of the 1920s, the pair of buildings at 5 Darley Street known as Ballina and built circa 1935 and Portree at 2A Darley Street which was constructed in the late interwar or post war era. Within a broader compass there are a number of distinctive interwar blocks of flats in Darlinghurst and the neighbourhood of Taylor Square. These include Belgenny at 389-393 Bourke Street (1938), the building formerly known as Kingsgate at 397-403 Bourke Street (1937), Claridge at the corner of Flinders and Taylor Streets (1941) Camden at the corner of Campbell and Denham Streets (circa 1935) and Royal Court at 227 Crown Street (circa 1935).

2.4 Subsequent History of Mont Clair

it is understood that Mont Clair was initially operated as serviced apartments. During World War II the building was taken over for use by American servicemen and then reverted back to serviced apartments after they had vacated it, and the north western apartment on the ground floor was occupied by a resident concierge for many years³¹.

According to records held at the City of Sydney Archive and South Sydney Council, there have been remarkably few alterations made to Mont Clair. In 1945 a timber stair was replaced with concrete stair, probably the fire escape on the western side of the building, and in 1958 minor modifications were made to the roof. No other alterations have been recorded.

The mortgage to the National Mutual Life Association of Australasia Limited was discharged in January 1959. The following August title was transferred from the Investment Company of Australia to Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Custodian Trustees (Canberra) Limited and then in November 1959 to Mont Clair Home Units Pty Limited³². This suggests that the building was at the point of changing from a situation of rental accommodation to owner occupancy. In the same month the Bill to introduce legislation facilitating ownership of flats, the *Conveyance (Strata Titles) Act*, was introduced into the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. The legislation was passed in March 1961³³. There is no record of alterations to the building held at the City of Sydney or South Sydney

³⁰ "On Continental Lines...", p.11.

³¹ Oral information received from the late Violet Cowley and confirmed by Florence Barnes. Both were residents of Mont Clair.

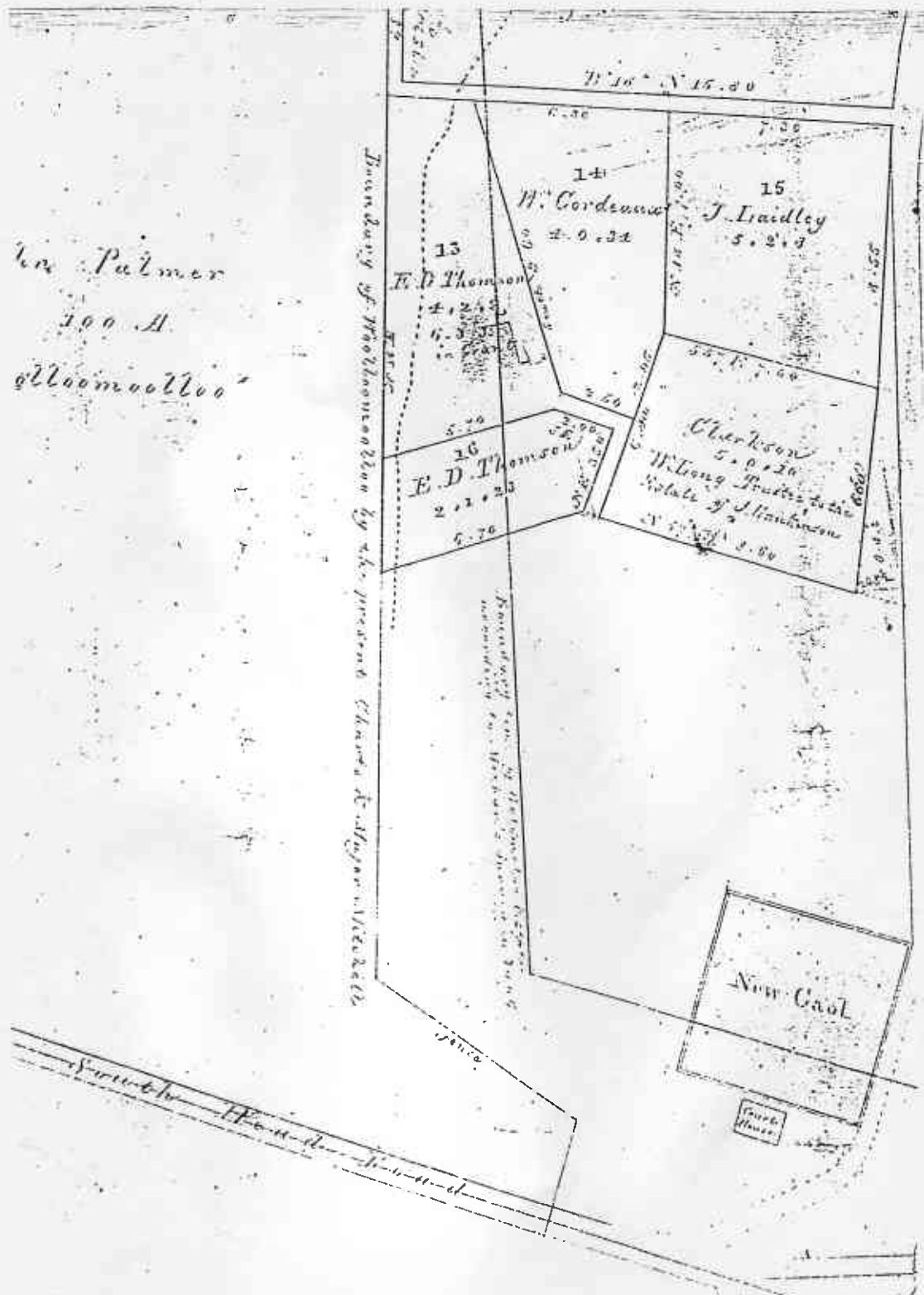
³² LTO Volume 4808 folio 45.

³³ Cardew, p.79.

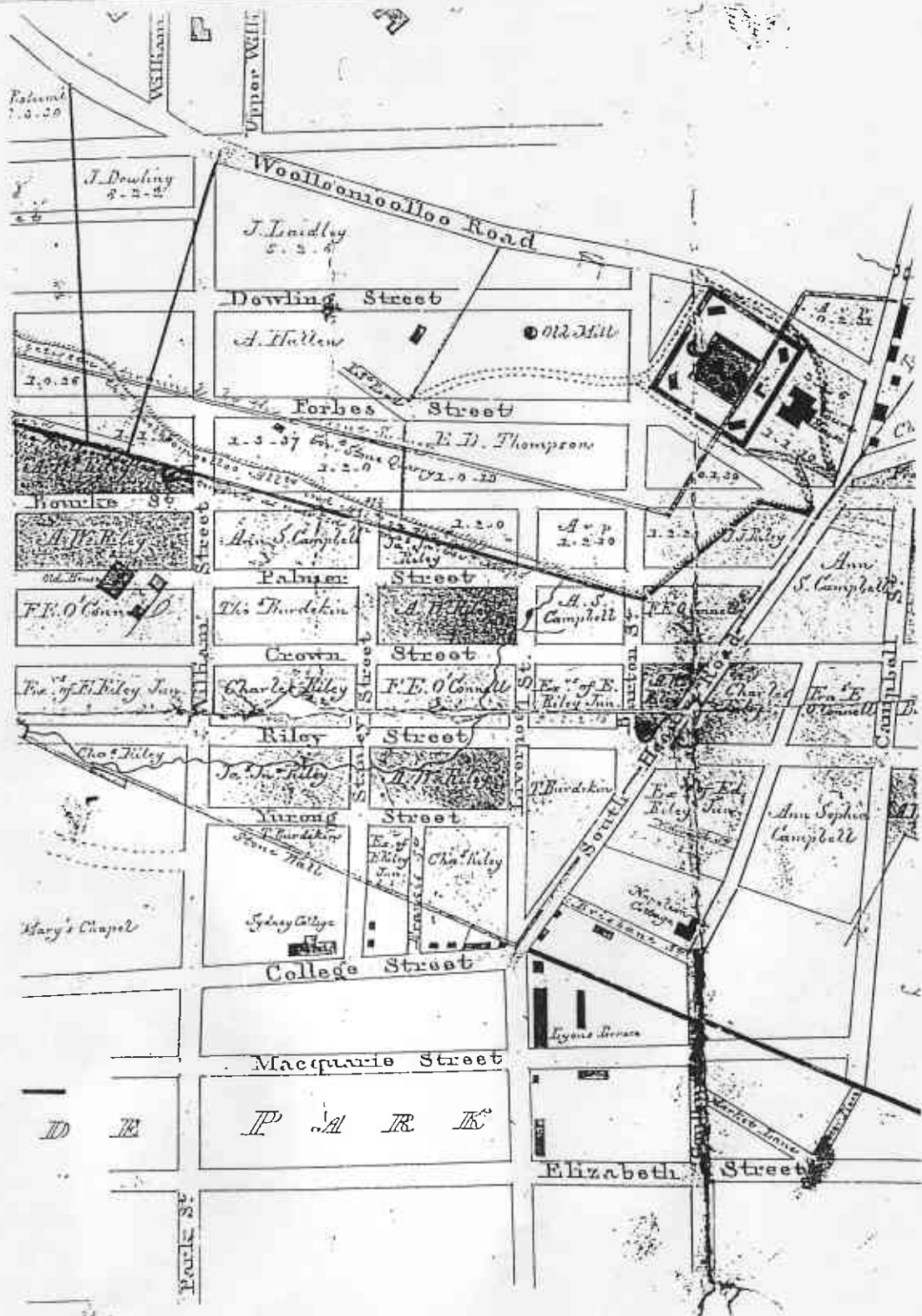
Council since that time, although the interiors of a number of apartments have been modified in the past forty years.

Mont Clair has become known to an international audience through its description in a book on the world's Art Deco architecture. It was only one of a few buildings to have been so honoured: "... In Australia, the nineteen-thirties Mont St. Clair [sic] Flats, in Sydney's Darlinghurst section, comprised a sleek seven-storey Streamline Moderne structure; except for its brick facade and height, this building, too, was akin to the sleek structures of Miami Beach Deco"³⁴

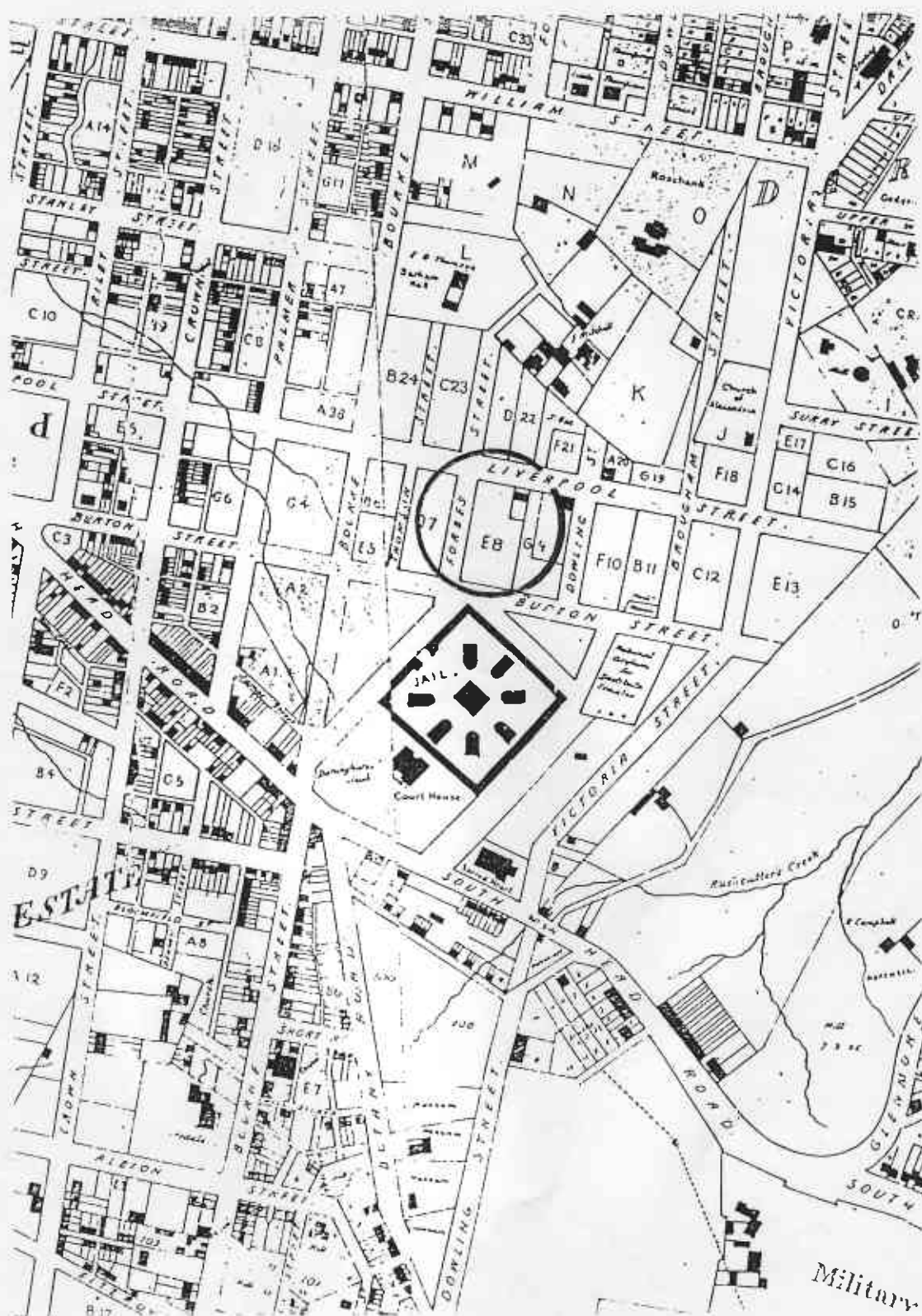
³⁴ Patricia Bayer, *Art Deco Architecture*, p.81.



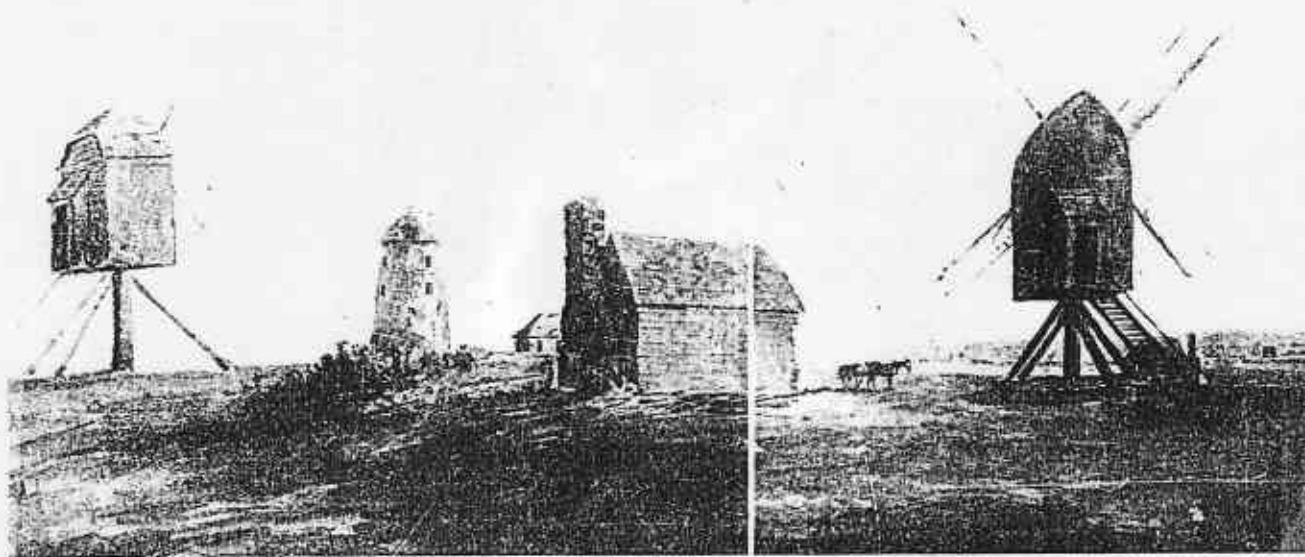
Peter Lewis Bemis's copy of the Government chart in the year 1829 (ML ZM4 811.18111/1844/1).



Detail of Peter Lewis Bemi's 1844 Plan of the allotments comprizing [sic] of the Riley Estate. The location of what was termed the "Old Mill" is shown, aligned with a Liverpool Street that only extended as far as Bourke Street (ML ZMB2 811.18111/1844/1).

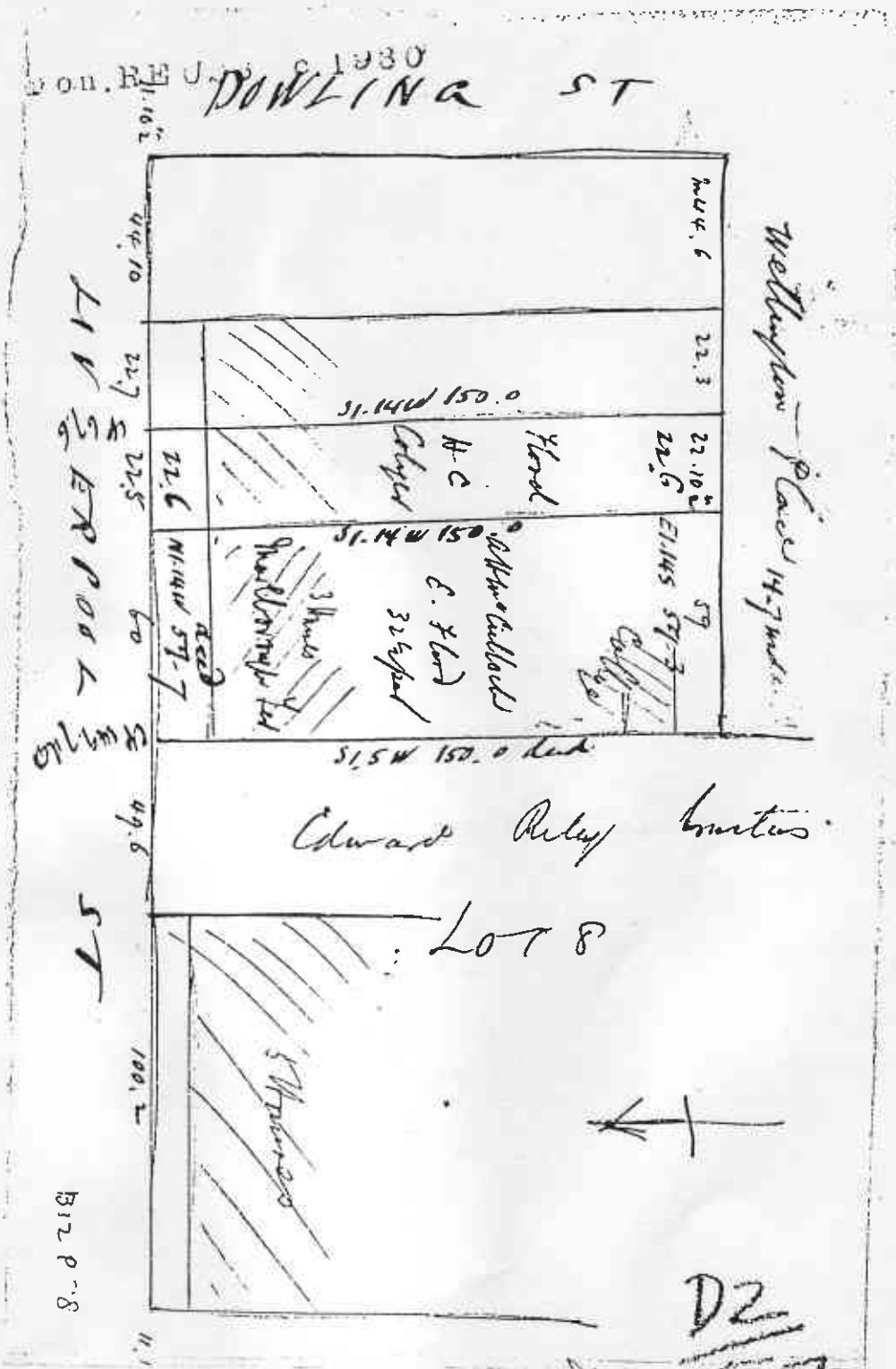


Detail of Well's 1850 Plan of the City of Sydney. The site of Mont Clair was part of Lot E8 (ML ZM4 811.17 gbbd/1850/1).

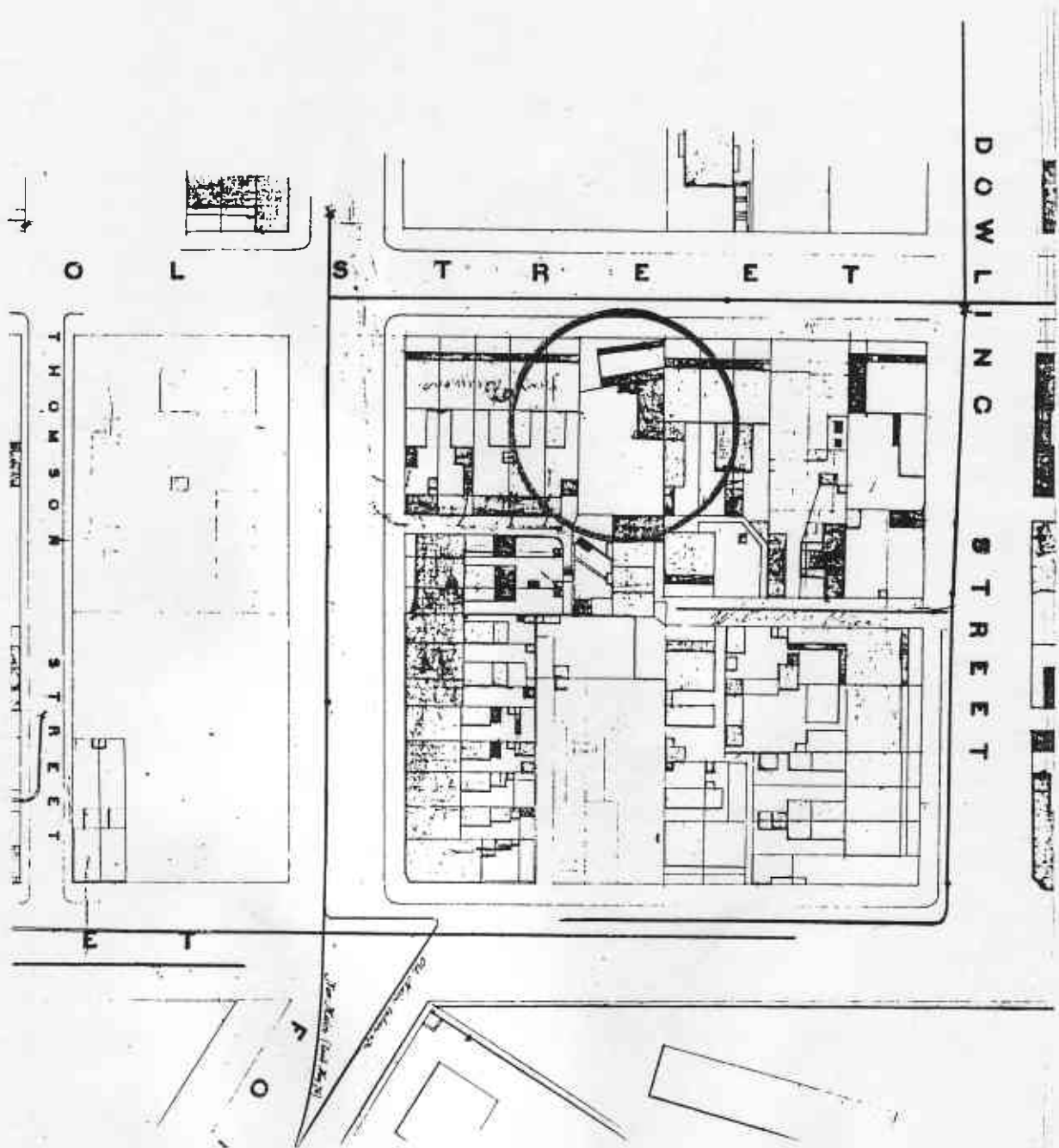


Clarkson's Mill was depicted in early sketches and drawings. The 'Long Panorama from Ellerslie' (above) is dated about 1835. Clarkson's Mill is in the middle. The Mill also appeared in this view of Darlinghurst in 1854 (below). (ML Small Picture File; top illustration reproduced in Fox, p.41).

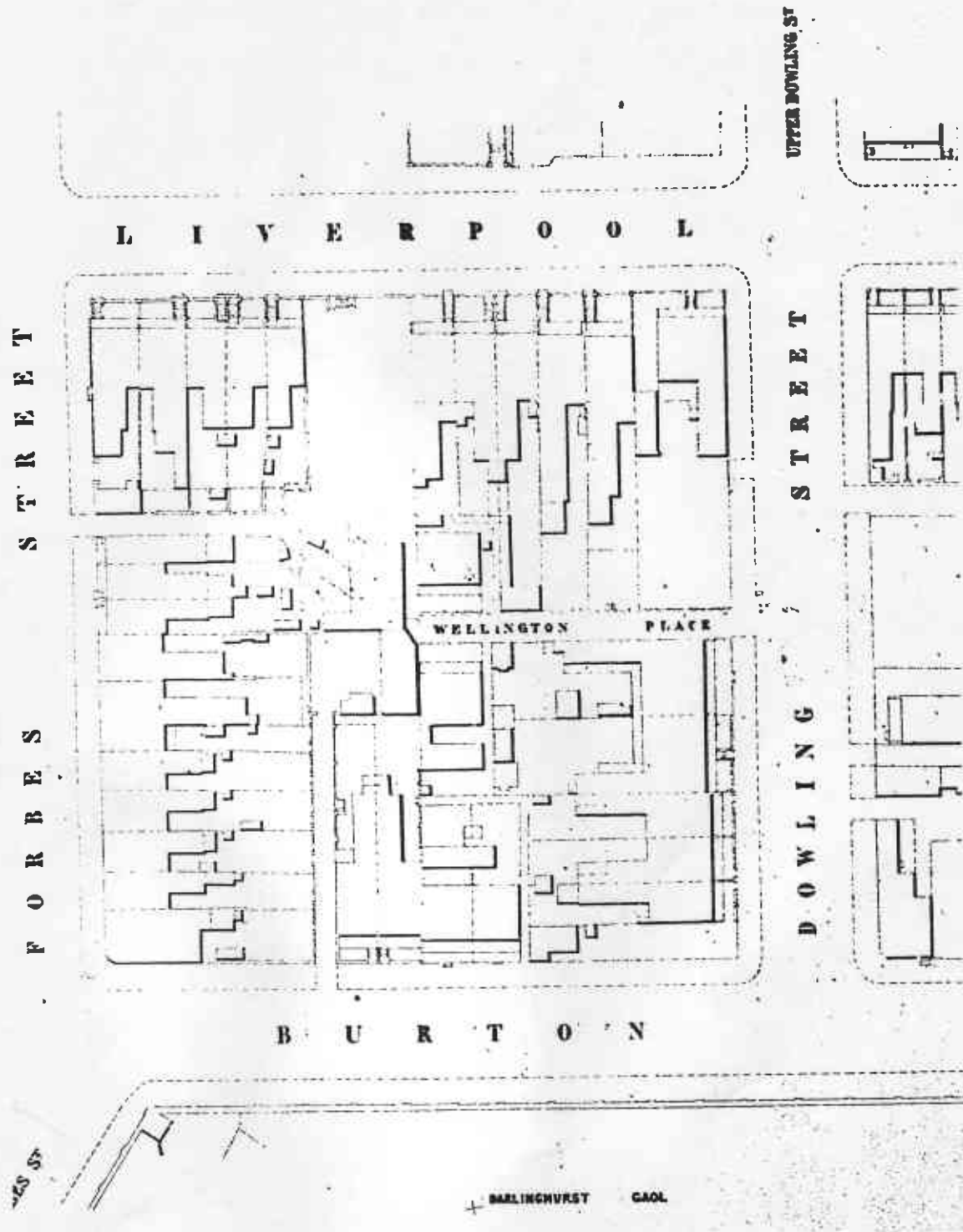




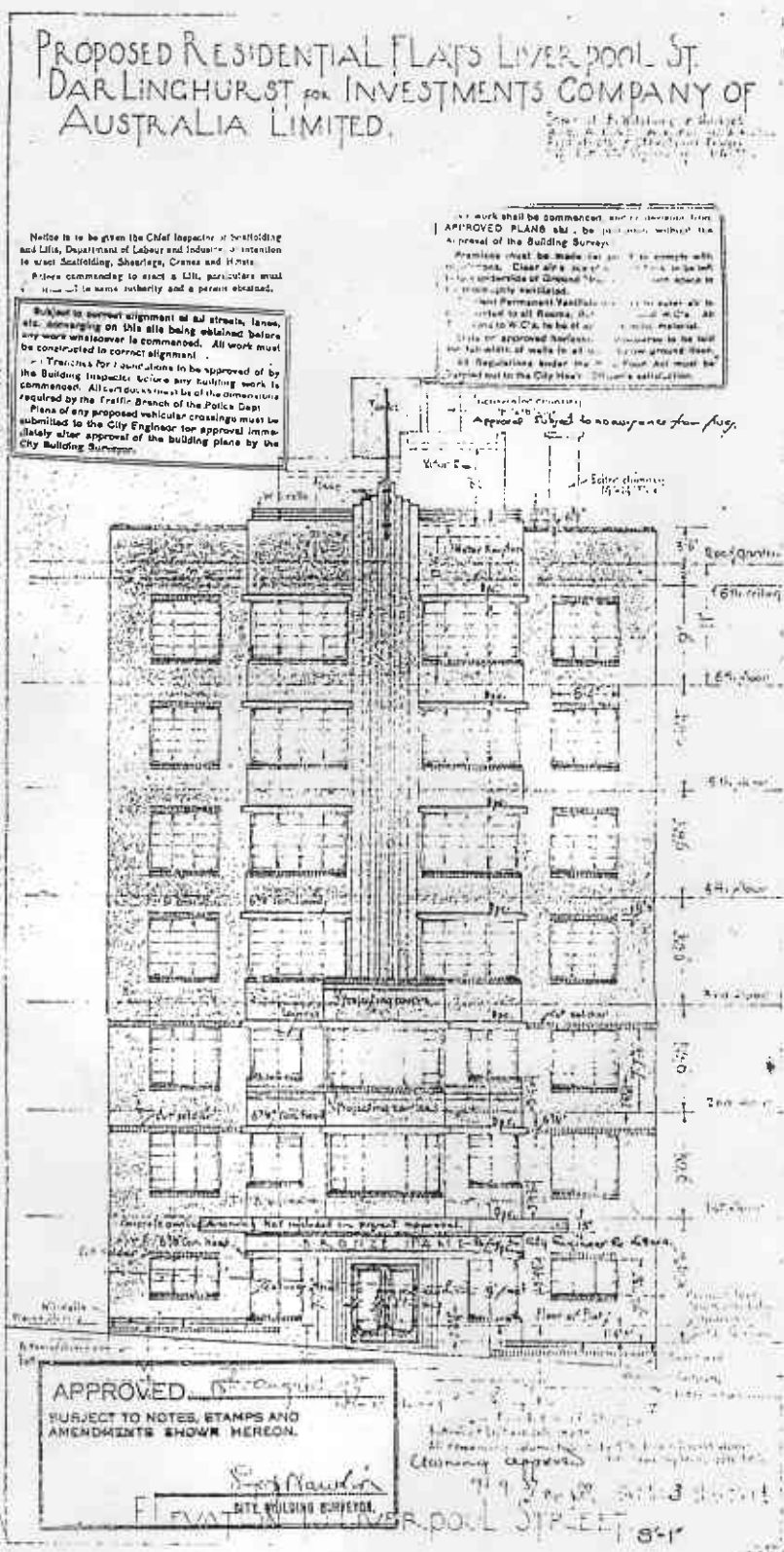
Undated sketch of the site of Mont Clair. It is noted "Edward Riley Trustees" (ML ZSP D2/57).



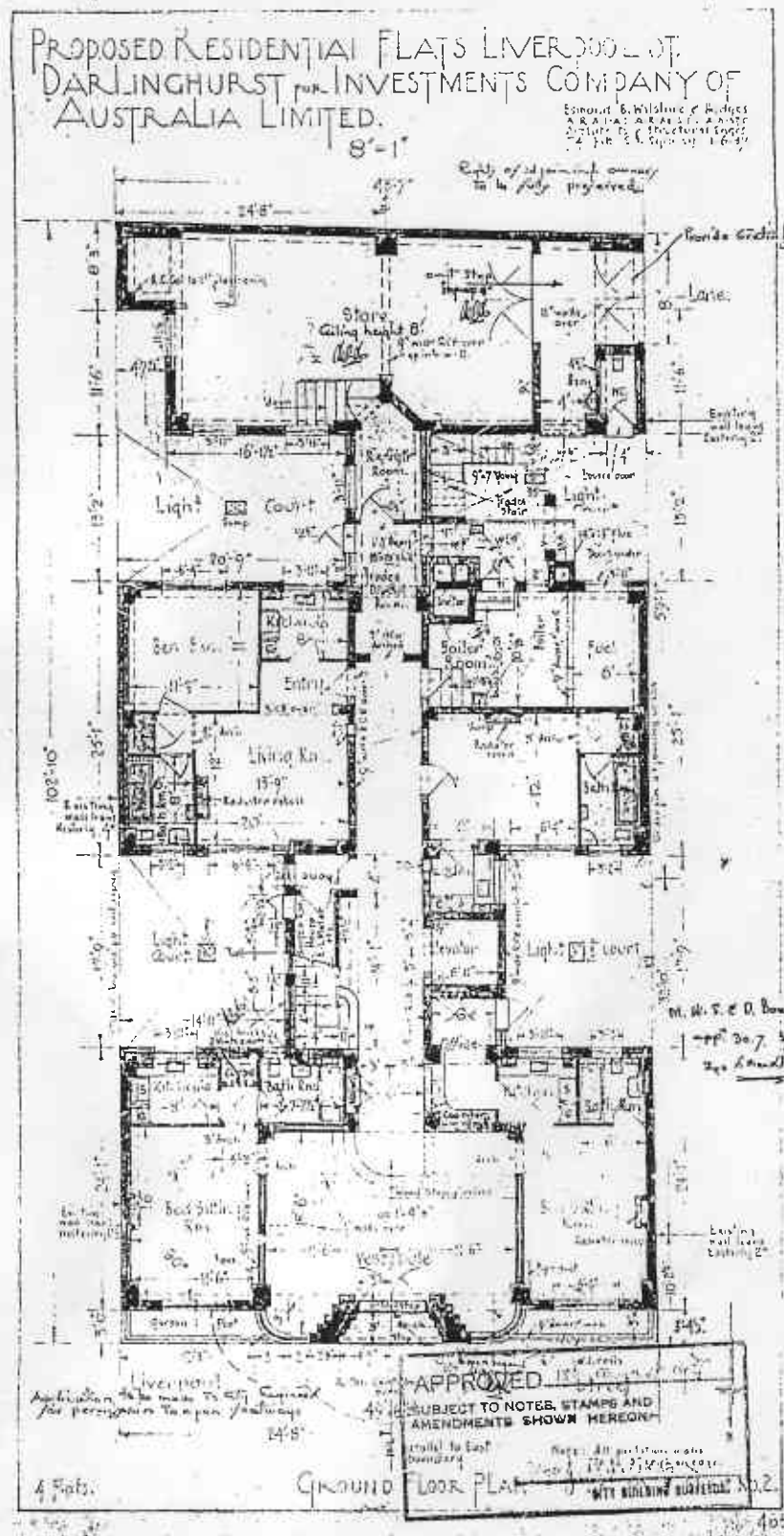
Portion of the Trigonometric Survey of 1865. The building near Liverpool Street that is splayed may have been a part of Clarkson's Mill (City of Sydney Archive).



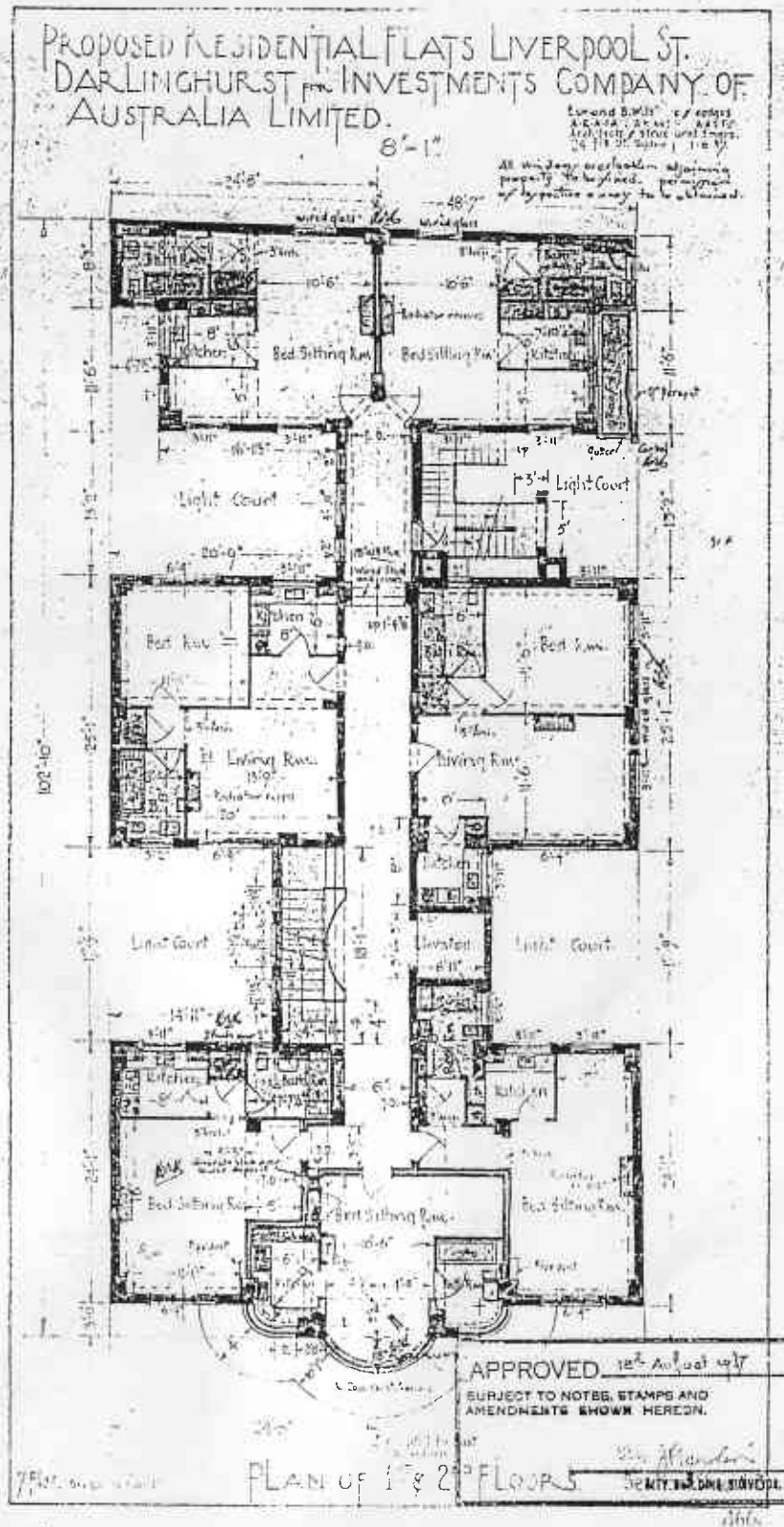
The site of Mont Clair in 1885. All the buildings on the site had been demolished by the time this plan was drawn (ML ZM SER 4 811.17/1 - Department of lands Metropolitan Detail Series, Sydney section I1).



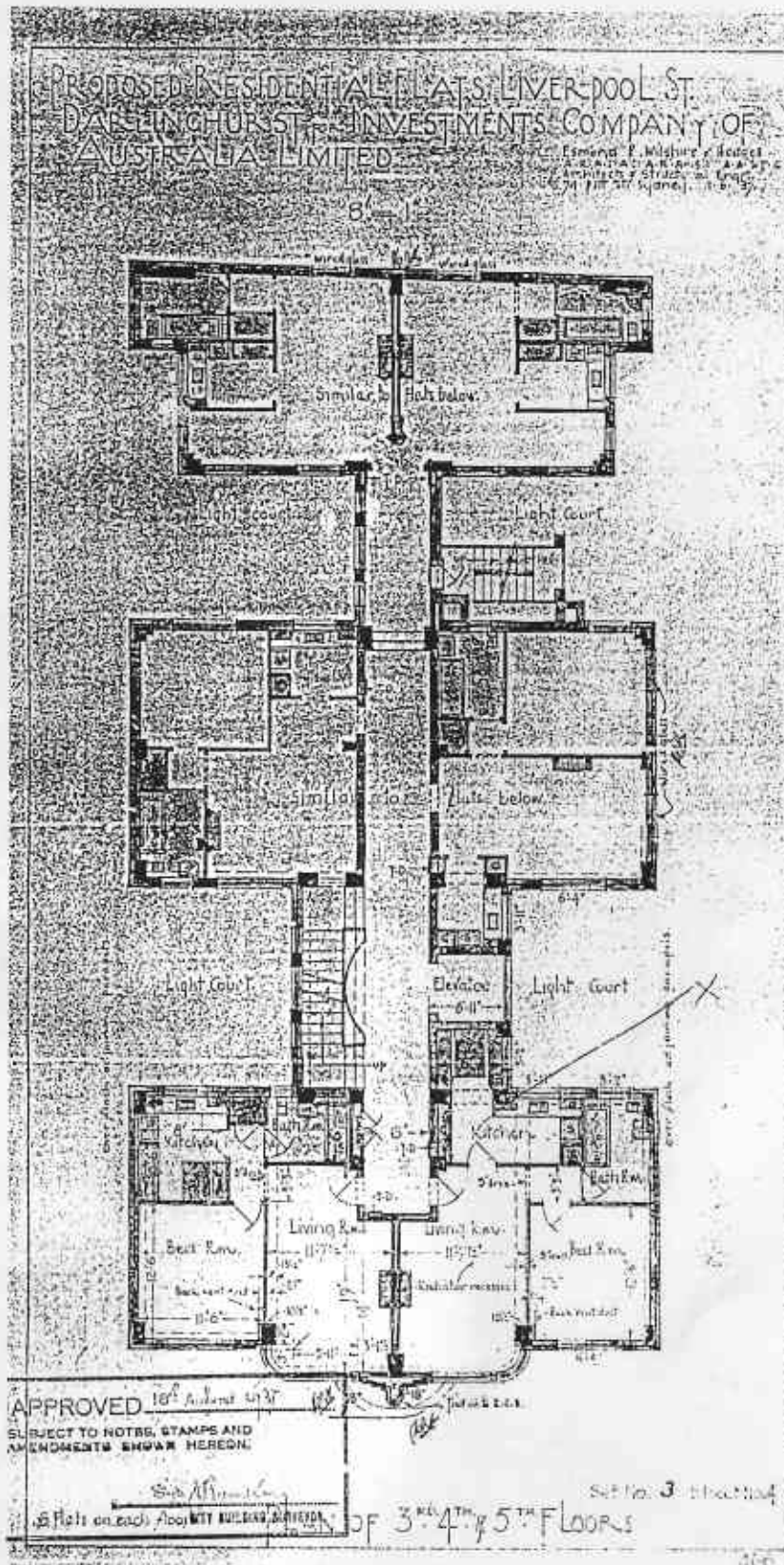
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the Liverpool Street facade, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



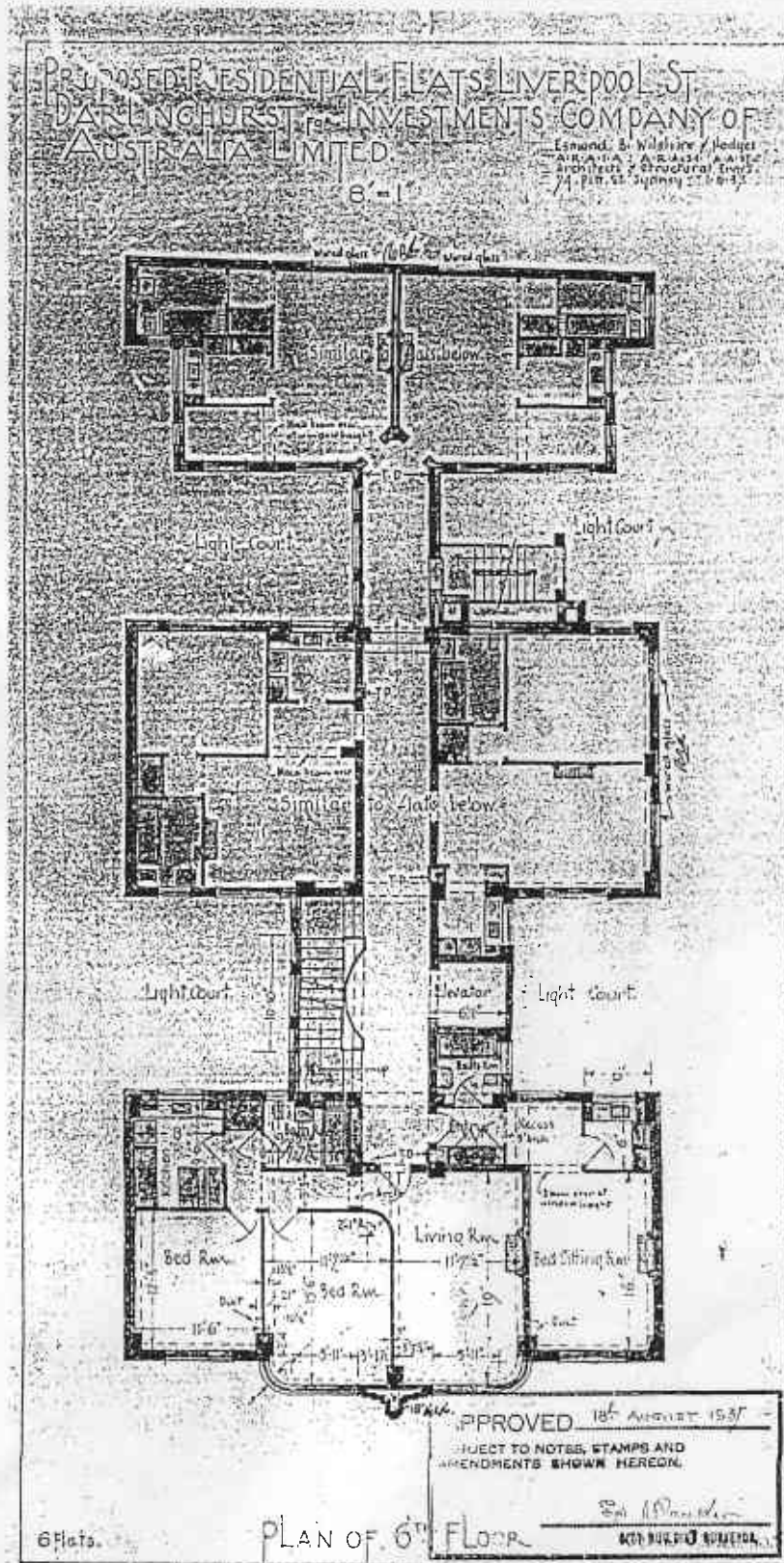
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the ground floor plan, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



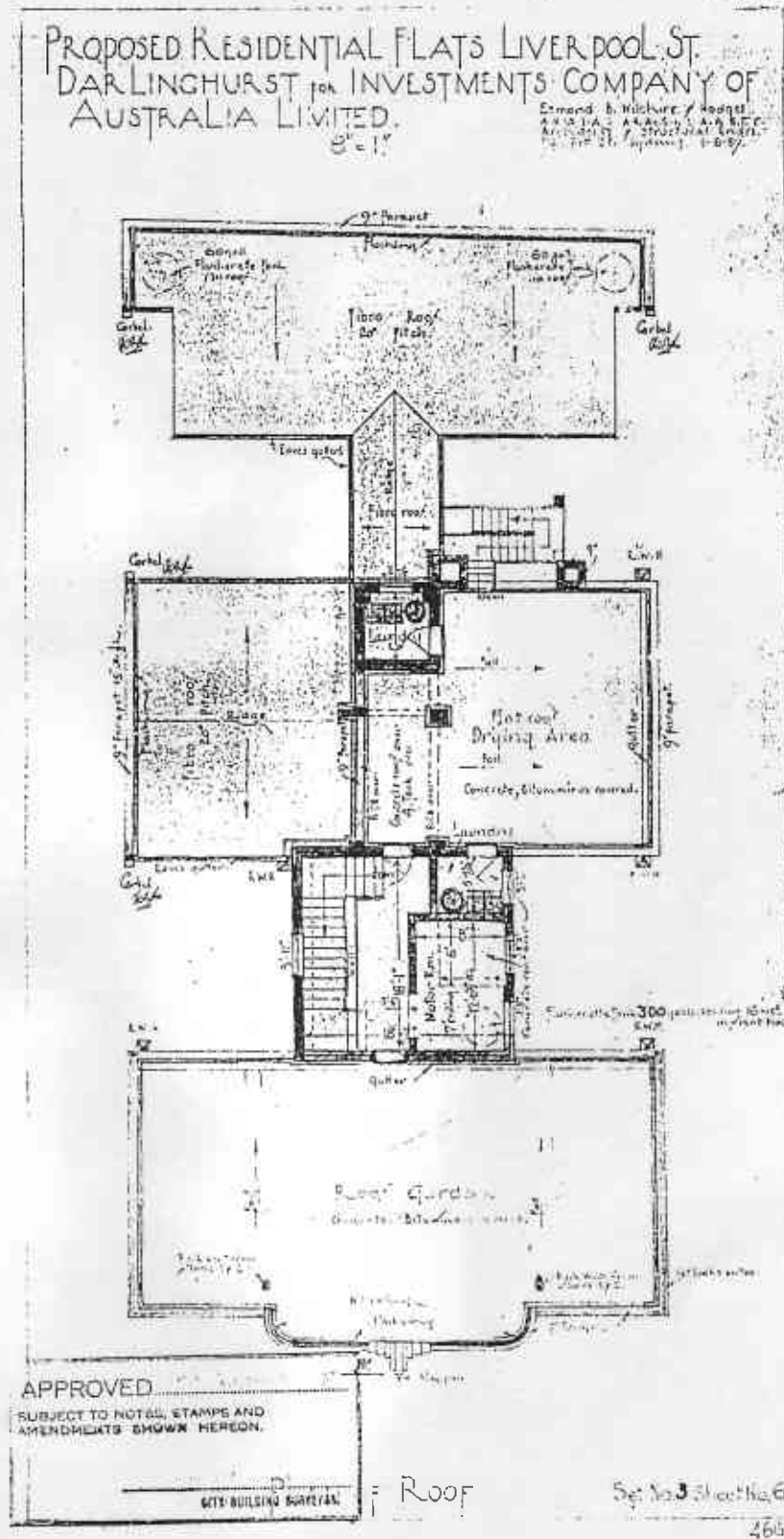
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the first and second floor plans, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



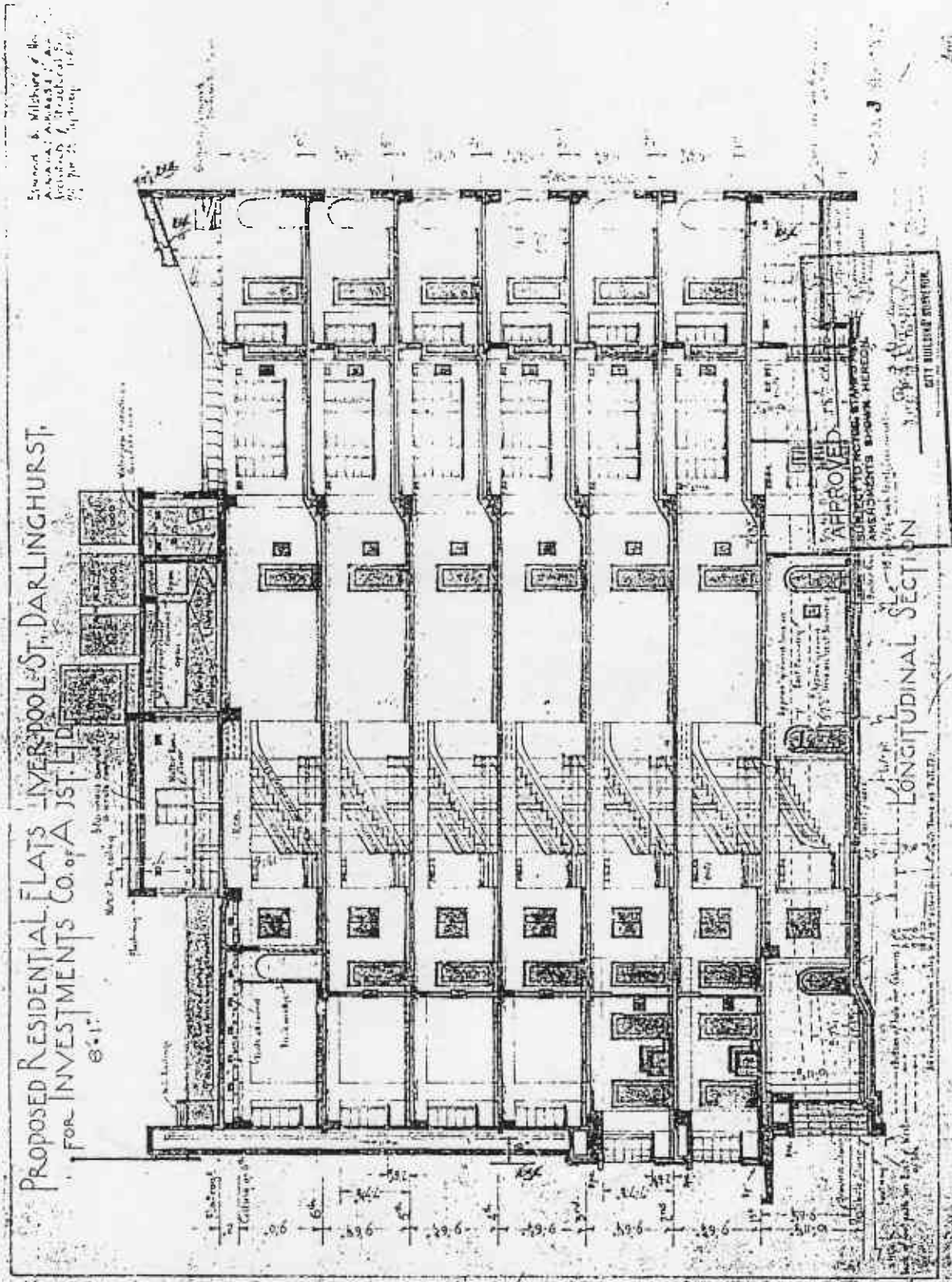
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the plans of the third, fourth and fifth floors, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



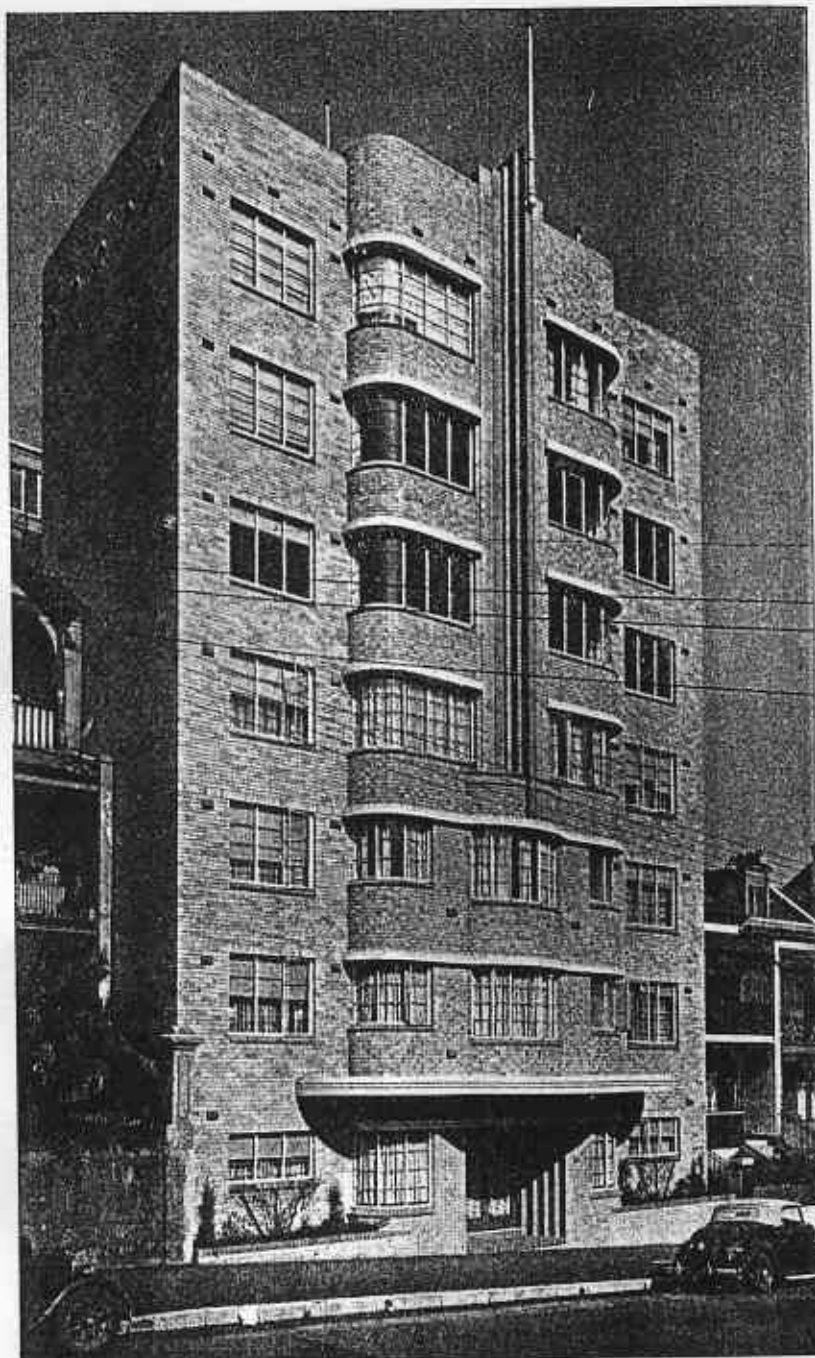
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the sixth floor plan, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



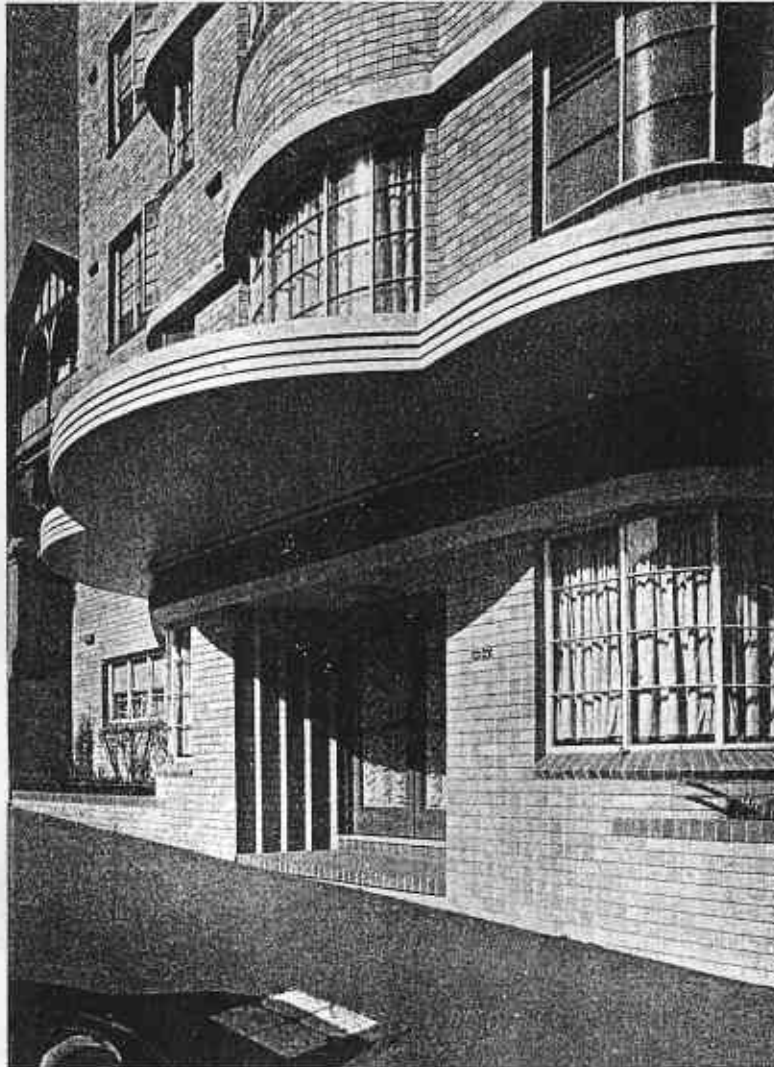
Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing of the roof plan, 1937 (City of Sydney Archive).



Esmond B Wilshire and Hodges' drawing showing a cross section through the building, 1937
 (City of Sydney Archive).



The facade of Mont Clair as it appeared after the building was completed (*Building*, 24 August 1938, p.24).



The main entrance to the building, 1938. It appears very much the same today (*Building*, 24 August 1938, p.27).

3.0 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Mont Clair was inspected by Roy Lumby on June 2000. Internally the inspection was restricted to public areas, the roof and service areas at ground floor level. These spaces are remarkably unchanged and are in good condition, evidence of the building having been well maintained for many years. No flats were inspected, although it is known that a number have been modified by means of remodeled kitchens and bathrooms.

3.1 Exterior

The exterior of the building, most particularly the Liverpool Street facade, is a fine example of what has become known as the Inter War Functionalist style. It reflects the absorption of the aesthetics, if not the philosophy, of modern European architecture of the 1920s and early 1930s. The first local essays in the style appeared in this country around 1935. The style is characterised by simple geometric shapes, light colours, large areas of glass and horizontal bands of fenestration. Windows were commonly metal framed and protected by shallow cantilevered canopies or hoods. Surfaces tended to be plain, whether of brick or cement render, and horizontal elements were balanced by vertical elements. Decoration consisted of parallel linear motifs and more florid elements derived from the Inter War Art Deco style³⁵. The style remained popular into the post war era.

The facade is remarkably intact and appears very much the same as in early photographs. The only apparent alteration that has taken place is the removal of the flagpole that was mounted on the central brick finial, although the brackets that secured it are still in place. Glazing in the curved windows on either side of the main entrance has been replaced with perspex due to breakages in the past and the unavailability of bent glass at that time, but this is not immediately apparent to the passer-by.

Alterations to the building have taken place along the eastern and western sides. The original steel framed windows have been replaced by aluminium framed sashes in numerous locations within the light wells and sides. A large area of cement render, rising through several levels of the building, has been applied to the western wall within the north western light court.

The northern part of the roof has been covered with paviers in relatively recent times. It appears that this part of the roof was not used for many years and has only reverted to recreational use in recent years. The brickwork of utility structures adjacent to the paved area has been painted. Elsewhere at roof level early, if not original, clothes lines are still in place. The corrugated fibro sheeting that originally covered parts of the building has been replaced with corrugated iron.

³⁵ Richard Apperly, Robert Irving and Peter Reynolds, *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, pp.184-187.

3.2 Interior

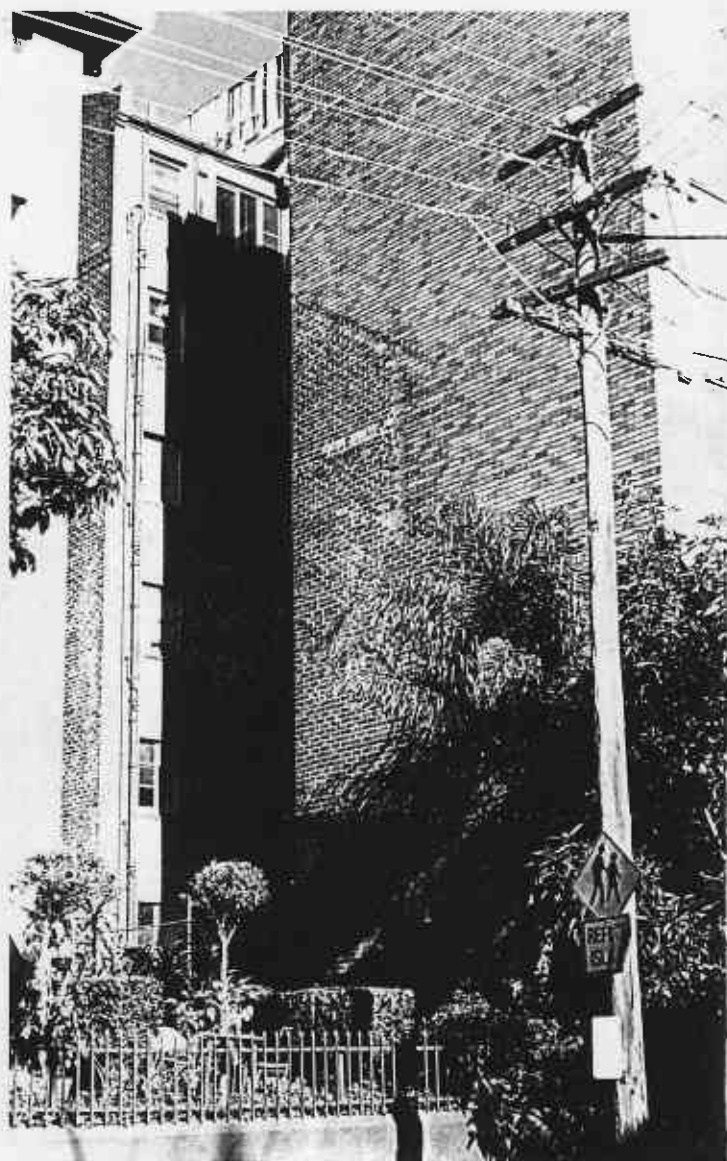
The public and circulation spaces within Mont Clair are remarkably intact and have been well maintained.

The vestibule on the ground floor has retained much of its original fabric, including original rubber or linoleum on the stair treads near the concierge's office, light fittings and timber parquet floors, but carpet visible in early photographs no longer exists. The concierge's office has retained original counters, a desk and the early telephone switchboard but the doorway that connected the office to the adjoining flat has been blocked up. A notice board on the western wall of the vestibule has been recently installed but is in character with the building - it was originally part of the 1940 block of flats at 7 Elizabeth Street Sydney and was saved from destruction by one of Mont Clair's residents. The central corridor to the south of the vestibule has original cornices which show an Art Deco influence. This is characteristic of decoration associated with Inter War Functionalist architecture. Doors to flats and other spaces on this level are arched. Light fittings are original and well maintained.

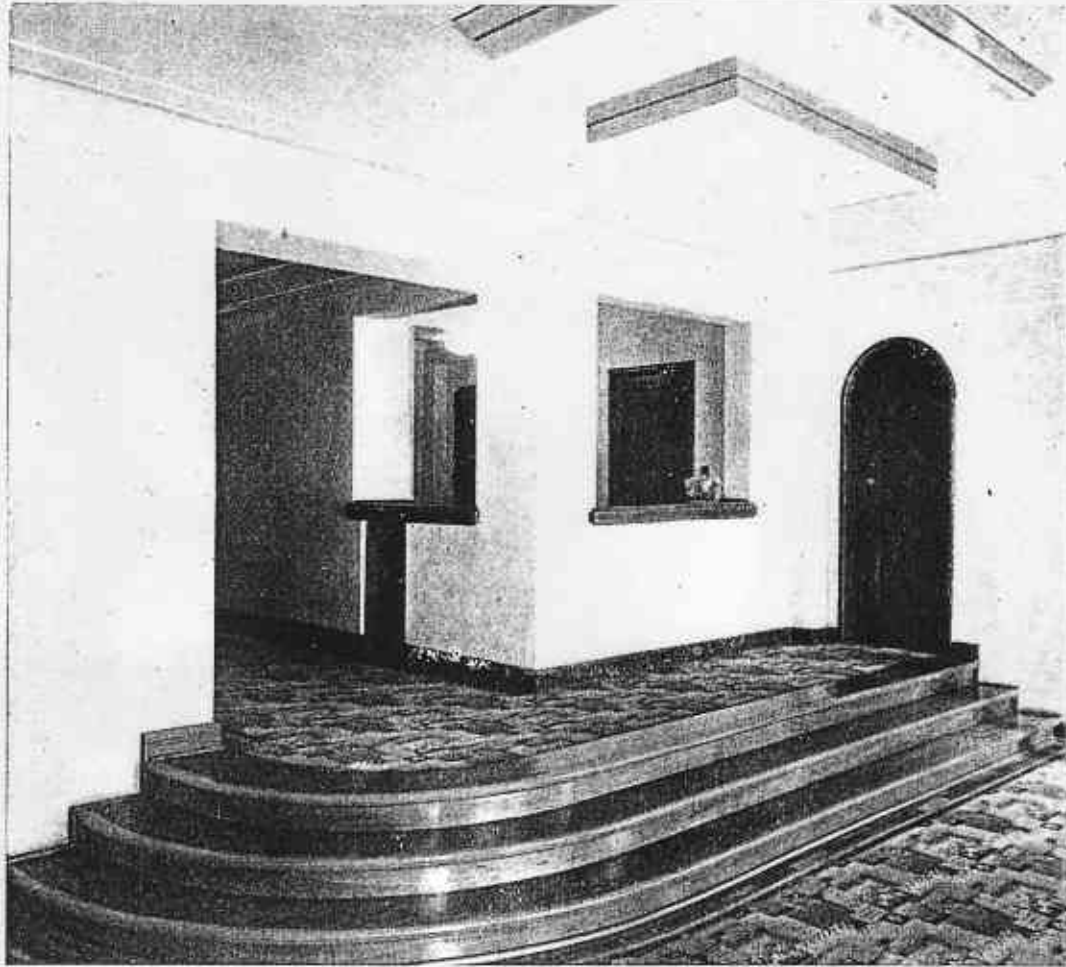
The storeroom and boiler room on the ground floor are both intact. The boiler room still contains the building's incinerator and coal bunkers that were associated with the boiler are still in place.

The stair on the eastern side of the building is intact, including terrazzo tread and riser linings and the wrought iron balustrade, which has been painted in colours to match those originally embellishing it. The distinctive concave space which contains the runs the full height of the building and is an important part of the character of Mont Clair. However, the original glass bricks that formed the eastern wall of the stair have been replaced by metal framed obscured glazing, which is deteriorating. The original lift and lift doors are also very intact, although the manually operated doors have been upgraded with a self closing mechanism.

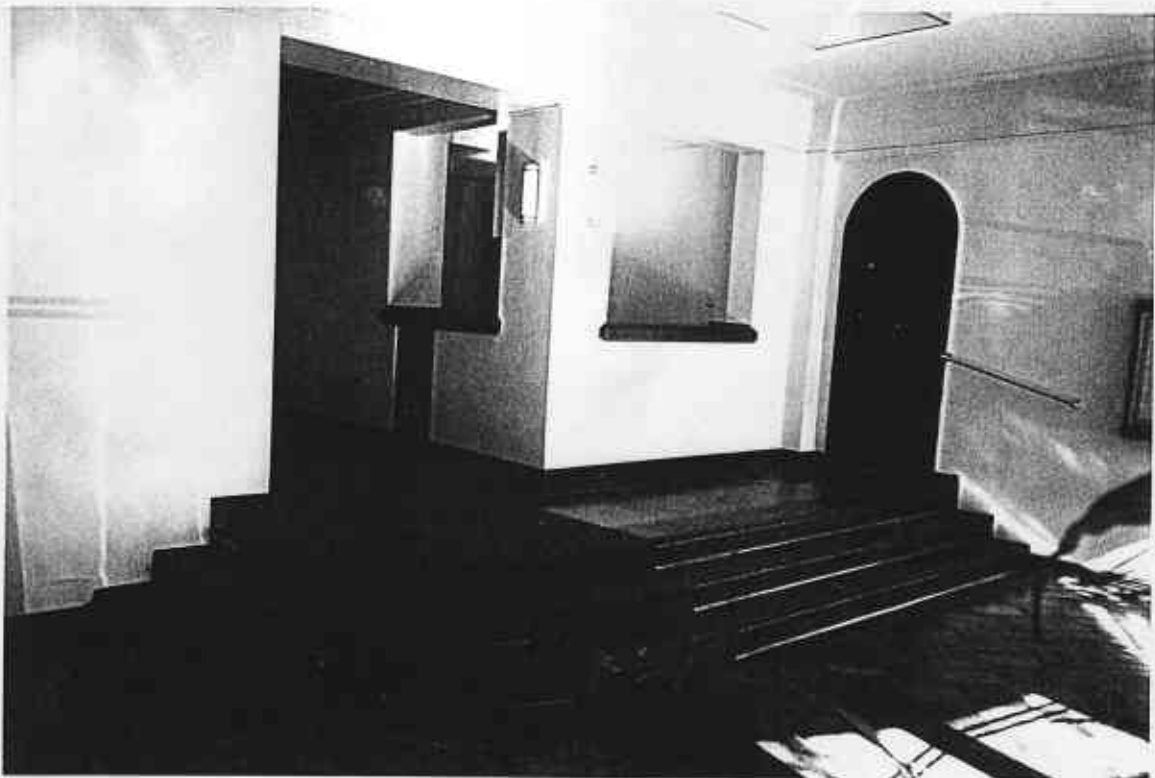
Public corridors on each level are generally intact. This includes small items such as serveries to apartments and hardware and numbers on apartment doors. Other intact early fabric includes timber parquet floors and skirtings. The original textured wallpaper in these spaces has been removed and the walls have been painted, although a small sample of the wallpaper has been retained and conserved. Later modifications to the corridors includes replacement of original light fixtures, the installation of exit signs and exposed wiring on walls and below cornices

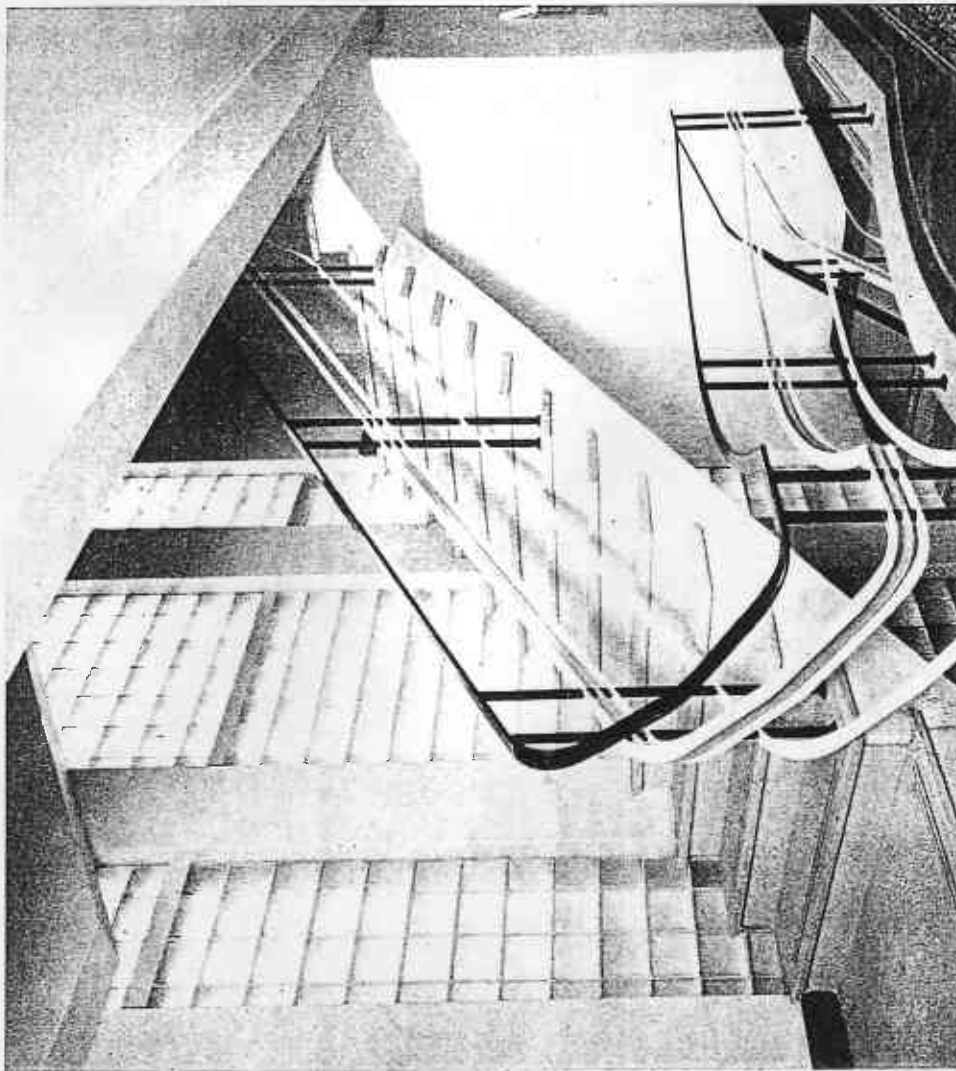
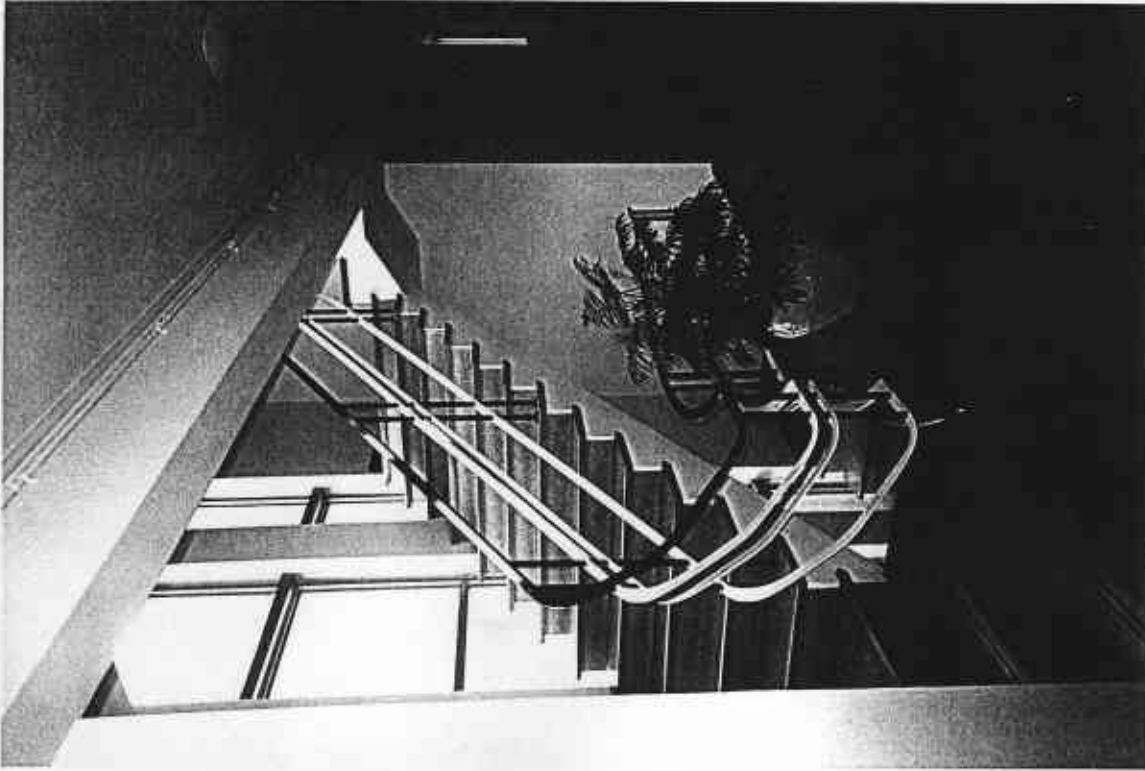


Modifications on the exterior of the building chiefly relate to the replacement of early steel window sashes with aluminium framed sashes on the eastern and western sides.



The vestibule remains very much the same as when the building was completed (*Building*, 24 August 1938, p.26).





The stair also remains very much the same as when the building was completed, although the original glass brick glazing has been replaced (Building, 24 August 1938, p.29).



Original and distinctive light fixtures in public spaces on the ground floor have been retained.

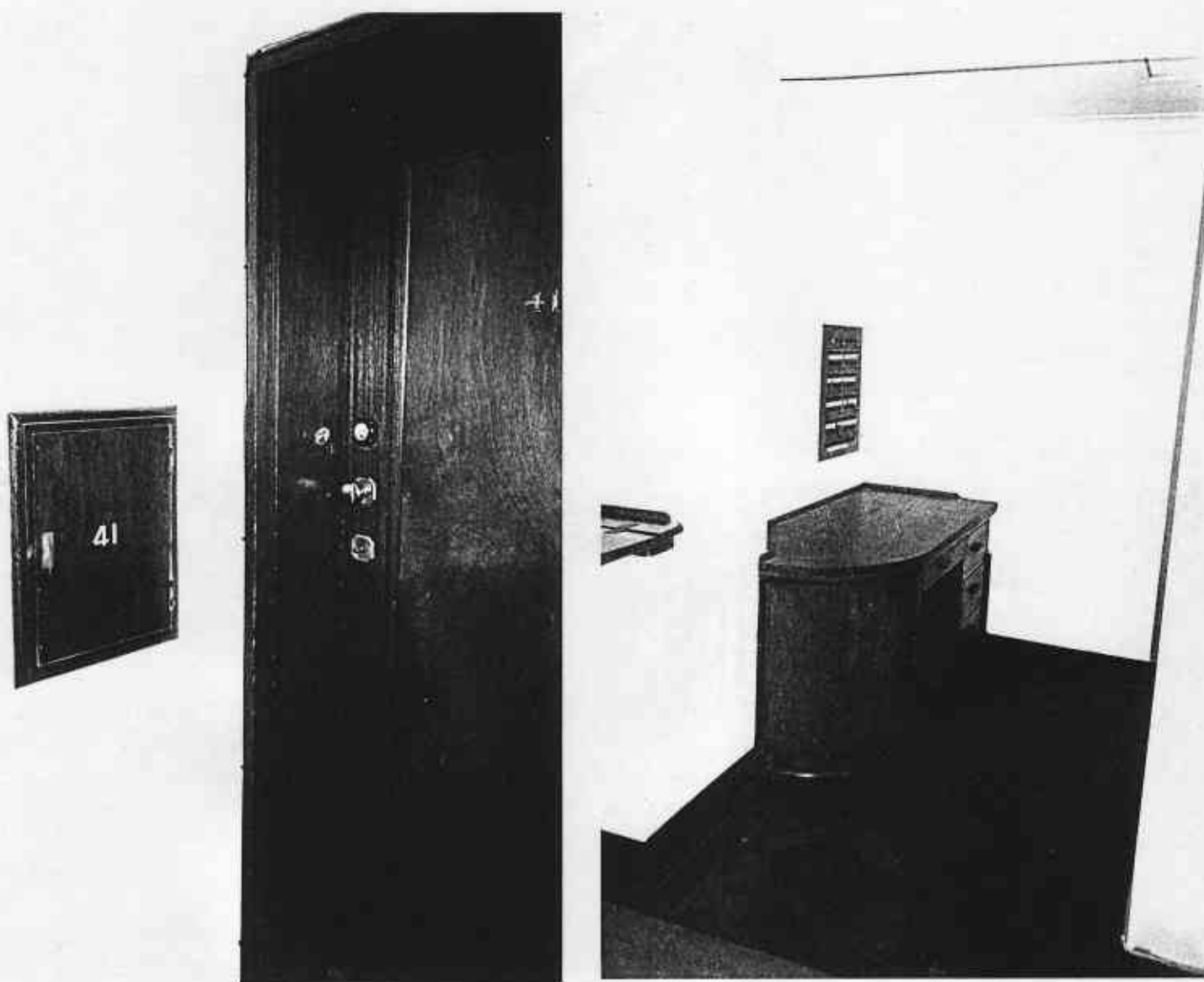




The original lift car and doors are in good condition and have not been greatly modified, apart from the installation of a self closing mechanism to the doors.



Corridors to flats on the ground floor (Left) and upper levels (right) have retained much of their early character and detailing. The spaces are related to each other vertically by the stair well that rises through the building.



Intact original fabric within the public areas of Mont Clair includes door joinery, serveries and hardware to individual flats (left) and the desk and telephone switchboard in the former concierge's office adjacent to the ground floor vestibule.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Heritage Office publication *Heritage Assessments* (November 1996) sets out four broad criteria for the assessment of an item's heritage significance. These are defined in the following terms:

- Criterion 1 - Historical Significance (evolution and association).

An item having this value is significant because of the importance of its association with, or position in the evolving pattern of our cultural history.

- Criterion 2 - Aesthetic Significance (scenic/architectural qualities/creative accomplishment).

An item having this value is significant because it demonstrates positive visual or sensory appeal, landmark qualities and/or creative or technical excellence.

- Criterion 3 - Technical/Research Significance (archaeological, industrial, educational, research potential and scientific significance values)

Items having this value are significant because of their contribution or potential contribution to an understanding of our cultural history or environment.

- Criterion 4 - Social Significance (contemporary community esteem)

Items having this value are significant through their social, spiritual or cultural association with a recognisable community.

There are also two criteria used to assess the degree of significance:

- Criterion A - Representativeness

Items having this value are significant because they are fine representative examples of an important class of significant items or environments.

- Criterion B - Rarity

An item having this value is significant because it represents a rare, endangered or unusual aspect of our history or cultural environment³⁶.

³⁶ *Heritage Assessments*, pp. 4-5.

4.1 Historical Significance

- The site of Mont Clair has some links with the Riley estate, its subdivision and sale. However, these are relatively late and are common to many sites in the locality.
- The site of Mont Clair is possibly associated with Clarkson's Mill, an early windmill located at Darlinghurst.
- The site may have some historical significance because of its apparent use as a dairy during the second half of the nineteenth century.
- Mont Clair has a minor association with Nathaniel Freeman, a relatively prominent Sydney business man from the middle of the twentieth century. However, his connections with the site were extremely brief and this association is considered to be tenuous.
- Mont Clair provides evidence of the consolidation of flats and population density in the area around Darlinghurst and the demography of people who lived in the area in the middle of the twentieth century.

4.2 Aesthetic Significance

- Mont Clair is a fine and representative example of the work of architects Wilshire and Hodges, which produced a relatively large body of work during the 1930s.
- Mont Clair is a good example of the Interwar Functionalist style applied to an apartment building, which is a relatively uncommon occurrence in Darlinghurst. The closest aesthetic equivalent to Mont Clair in the area of Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and Elizabeth Bay is Wroxton at 22 Roslyn Gardens Elizabeth Bay, designed by architect Dudley Ward and completed in 1937.
- Mont Clair has significance because it has retained original public spaces and fabric in an intact and well maintained condition.
- The building is a prominent visual landmark on Liverpool Street, especially when viewed from the west.

4.3 Technical/Research Significance

- Intact fabric such as the incinerator and switchboard may contribute to Mont Clair demonstrating technical significance.
- It is possible, although perhaps unlikely, that traces of Clarkson's Mill and other early uses of the site may still exist beneath the building.

4.4 Social Significance

- Mont Clair is not considered to have social significance. It does not appear to have social, spiritual or cultural associations with a recognisable present day community.

4.5 Statement of Cultural Significance

Mont Clair is a very good representative example of an Inter war Functionalist apartment block with an accomplished facade, which has retained a great deal of its original layout and fabric in public areas. It is a good example of the architectural practice of Wilshire and Hodges, which designed a relatively large number of buildings throughout Sydney during the 1930s. The building has some historical significance as evidence of the consolidation of flat construction in the locality during the 1930s. It is a prominent visual landmark in this part of Darlinghurst.

4.6 Heritage Listings

The significance of Mont Clair has been acknowledged by several groups and organisations:

- It is listed as a heritage item by South Sydney City Council;
- It is included in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) register of Twentieth Century Buildings of Significance;
- It is included as an item in the Art Deco Building Inventory, compiled by the Art Deco Society of NSW;
- It is included as an item in the Inventory of Items, compiled by the Twentieth Century Heritage Society of NSW.

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APPENDIX 1

Extract from *Building*, 24 August 1938

The Modern Flat

"MONT CLAIR" AND "BELGENNY." *Two New Outstanding Sydney Examples.*

The rise of the flat building in modern times is more than a passing phase—it is a social change, and may be observed in different forms all over the world. In England we find great blocks of flats being erected in fashionable quarters, while in the more frugal areas huge housing schemes are being built to cope with the demand of the everyday man for adequate housing accommodation. On the Continent we find similar conditions prevailing, while in America the enormous apartment houses have been a feature of the major cities since the War.

Coming back to our own country, it is also interesting to observe the different manner in which the flat problem is approached in Sydney and Melbourne. In Sydney, the tendency in the recognised flat areas is to erect multi-storied blocks, complete with elevators and all modern conveniences. Land values, difficult sites and a desire for the view of the harbour, are no doubt important influencing factors.

In Melbourne, on the other hand, we find the question approached in a somewhat different fashion, the blocks seldom being more than two storeys in height, and stretched horizontally rather than vertically. Elsewhere in this issue we illustrate "Denby Dale," which may be taken as a good example of the Victorian interpretation of the flat. (Another attractive example was featured as the frontispiece in the July issue of "Building" magazine). There is undoubtedly much to recommend such structures as "Denby Dale," which in addition to providing all the facilities of the flat, by being cast in a domestic mould and surrounded by spacious gardens, tend to combine the amenities of both flat and house. Such propositions, however, in the crowded areas of Darlinghurst, Edgcliff and Woollahra, would no doubt be just as incongruous as would the structures illustrated herewith in the setting of "Denby Dale."

"Mont Clair," Liverpool Street, Sydney.
Architects: Esmond B. Wilshire and Hodge.
Builders: S. D. C. Kennedy & Bird Ltd.

"Mont Clair" is situated in Liverpool Street, Darlinghurst, on the top of the ridge, were it commands magnificent views of Farm Cove and the harbour generally. The design of the facade is clear cut, modern, efficient

and attractive, and the architects have been particularly successful in their handling of the colours and textures, the main brickwork being of a russet biscuit tone, which is a relief from the more generally accepted colouring. A dominating feature of the design is the curved cantilever concrete awning, which covers the entrance.

The building comprises seven floors, and is designed in three inter-connecting blocks, the internal flats being lit from spacious light courts, the bases of which are attractively treated with palms and flagstoning. The rear of the premises is served by a lane from Forbes Street, from which the whole building is serviced, thus eliminating the undesirable presence of trades people in the public sections of the building, a problem which always presents difficulties on less convenient sites.

The Flats and their Equipment.

Each floor contains seven flats, ranging from the bachelor type with bed-sitting room, bathroom and kitchen, to the larger units comprising two bedrooms, living room, bathroom and kitchen. As is almost mandatory in the modern flat of 1938, each unit is provided with refrigeration, hot water service and refuse destructor, while each flat is similarly served with direct inter-house communication with the manager's office and telephone, controlled by the general switchboard operator. The kitchens and bathrooms are attractively appointed, with electric stoves (see illustrations page 63) and all other conveniences. The building is also equipped with a modern elevator.

The following sub-contractors were connected with the work: Refrigeration, Warburton Franki Ltd.; Incineration, Malloys Ltd.; Roofing, James Hardie & Co. Pty. Ltd. and Pabco Products Ltd.; Steel windows, Aquila Steel Co. Pty. Ltd.; Electric stoves, British General Electric Co. Ltd.; Wall tiling, Zieman Parker & Graham Pty. Ltd.; Sanitaryware, Metters Ltd.; Flush valves and fittings, John Danks & Son Pty. Ltd.; Fibrous plaster, Burwood Fibrous Plaster Co.; Glazing, F. G. O'Brien Pty. Ltd.; Glass bricks, Australian Window Glass Pty. Ltd.; Elevator, Waygood Otis.

(Continued overleaf)



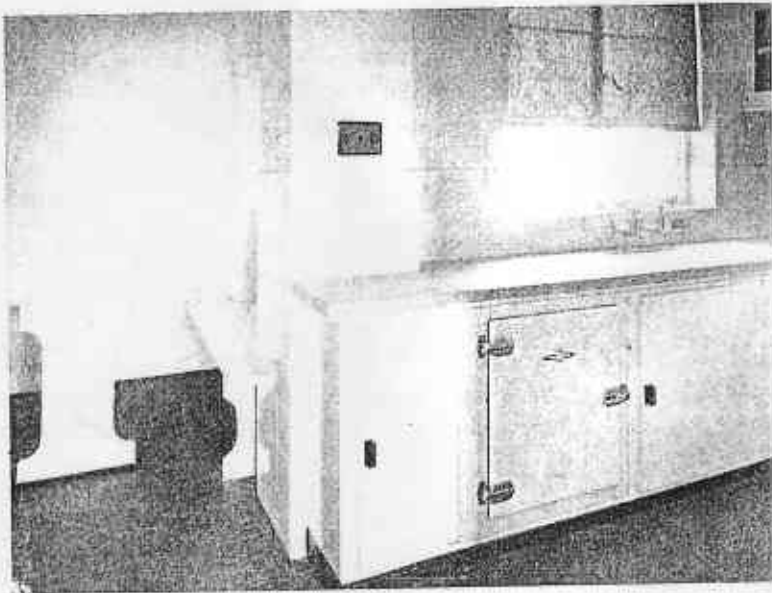
"MONT CLAIR," 347 LIVERPOOL STREET, DARLINGHURST, SYDNEY.

Architects: Esmond B. Wilshire & Hodges.

Builders: S. D. C. Kennedy & Bird Ltd.

A Typical Lounge Room and Kitchen.

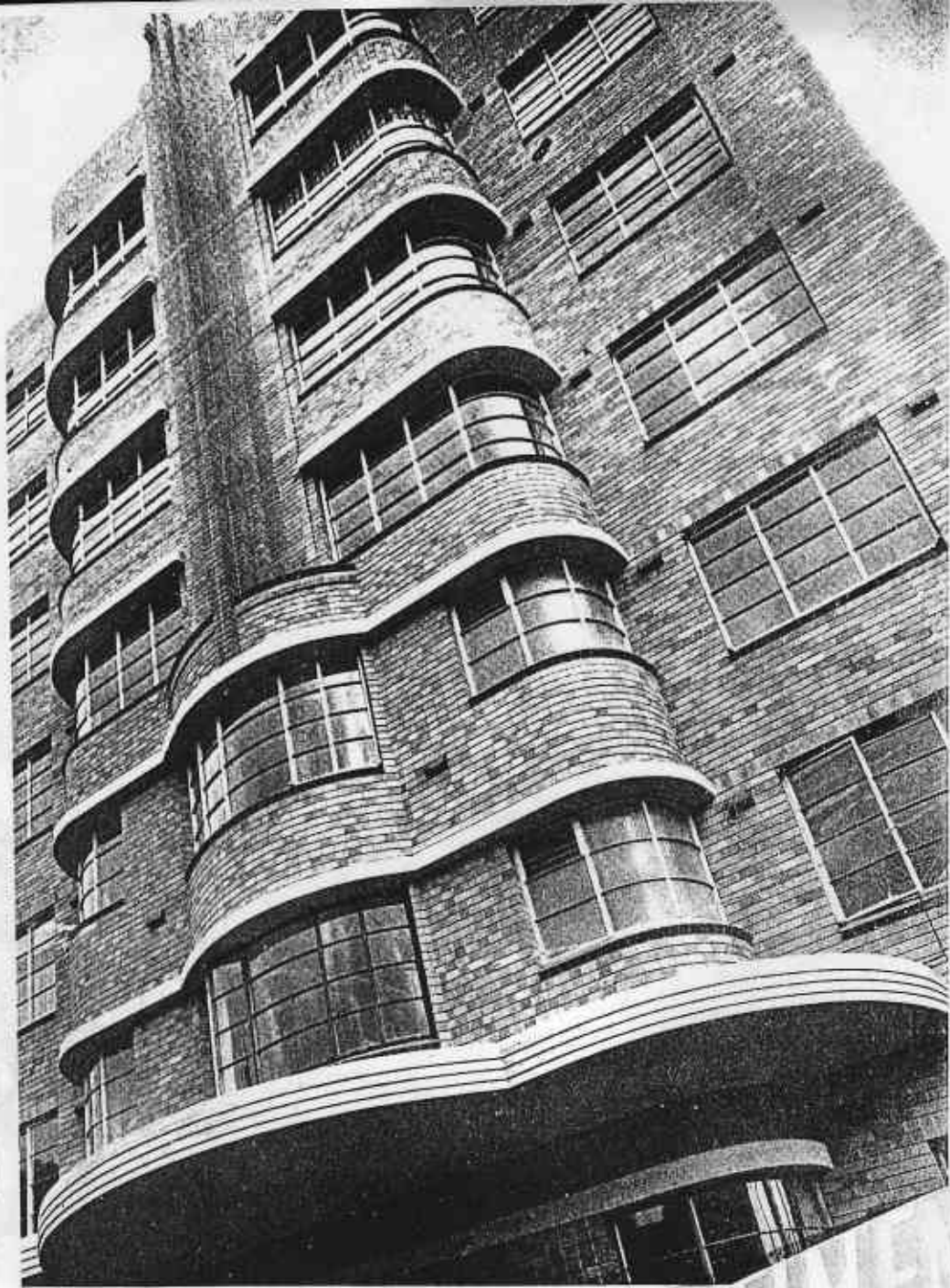
The upper illustration which shows a typical lounge room, gives a good idea of the splendid light and sun which enters every flat at some time of the day. The upper flats also command wonderful views of the Harbour. The lower illustration shows one of the kitchens, showing the spacious sink and cupboards and meal alcove, also the built-in "Frigidaire" refrigerator unit supplied by Warburton Franki Ltd.



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APPENDIX 2

Extract from *Decoration and Glass*, August 1938



EDINBURGH



DARLINGHURST

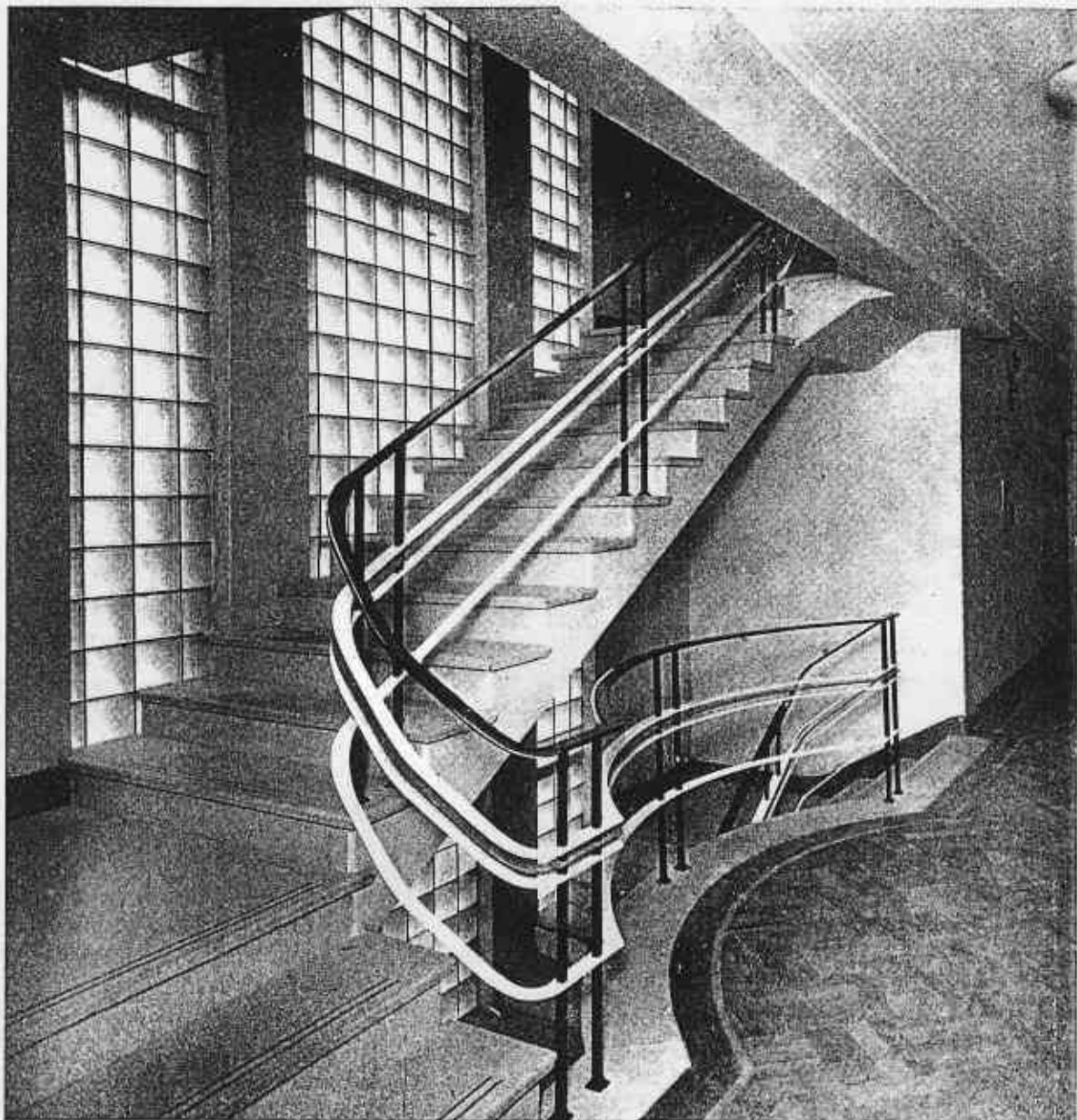
THE activity in flat building in the city of Sydney and the nearer suburbs defies a suitable adjective. There has never at any time been such feverish building in the history of the city or the industry.

Closer in it is the bachelor and small family flat that is predominating. The minimum of accommodation in the most central position seems to be the desideratum. The planning of flats to meet this demand has advanced so that it is quite astonishing to see the small area into which the required accommodation can be packed.

Mont Clair, Liverpool Street, Sydney, is the latest to be completed. Its proximity to the centre of the city makes it ideal for the bachelor, the business girl and the small business family. This fact has influenced the planning. Flats are not all to the same plan. There is quite a variety within limits, but the requirements of the class just enumerated have guided the layout.

The exterior is attractive and tells at once that false economy has not been attempted. Seven stories high, verticality has naturally become the motif, but it has not been stressed unduly.

■ On opposite page: The bent glass windows and concrete hoods give a Continental feeling to the façade. Above: The vestibule is carpeted over the parquet and walls are textured.



The flanking bays are recessed and use has been made of this feature of the plan in the provision of garden space on each side of the entrance. Bent glass windows and rounded corners to the brickwork add character to the projecting centre bays. All headers in the brickwork further emphasise this point.

A reinforced concrete hood over the entrance follows the curves of the walls above it and on plan is a series of three sweeps. The two floors immediately above feature bent glass windows in the centre. This resolves itself into a brick fin, which runs like a tower right up the face of the building and terminates in a flagpole.

■ The stair-well is lit by three continuous panels of glass masonry. The wrought iron balustrade is finished in black, red and cream, and is a notable piece of work.

The front flats on the first and second floors where these windows occur are the largest in the building, thus accounting for the extra windows. The plan varies at the third floor level, but remains the same from there up.

The steel frames of the windows are painted cream and the concrete heads over windows are the same colour. A light shade has been chosen for the brickwork.

Many steps in the brickwork lead into the

entrance doors, accommodated in a recessed porch. Panels are all glass and the frames Queensland maple. Push bars protect the glass panels.

The name MONT CLAIR is in metal letters over the doors.

The entrance vestibule is spacious, with parquet floor and a patterned carpet. The amount of parquet flooring in the building is a pleasant feature and a distinct departure that is certain to be repeated in other structures of a similar nature. All the public halls and corridors and every floor throughout the building except bathrooms and kitchens are parquet.

Walls are textured and the plain ceiling carries a large lighting fixture of glass and chromium.

Three broad steps lead up to the corridor and the reception desk. The latter is conveniently situated. Strip lighting at the corner pier is notable.

All door heads on the ground floor are circular and doors feature a large single panel. The door furniture is modern in design.

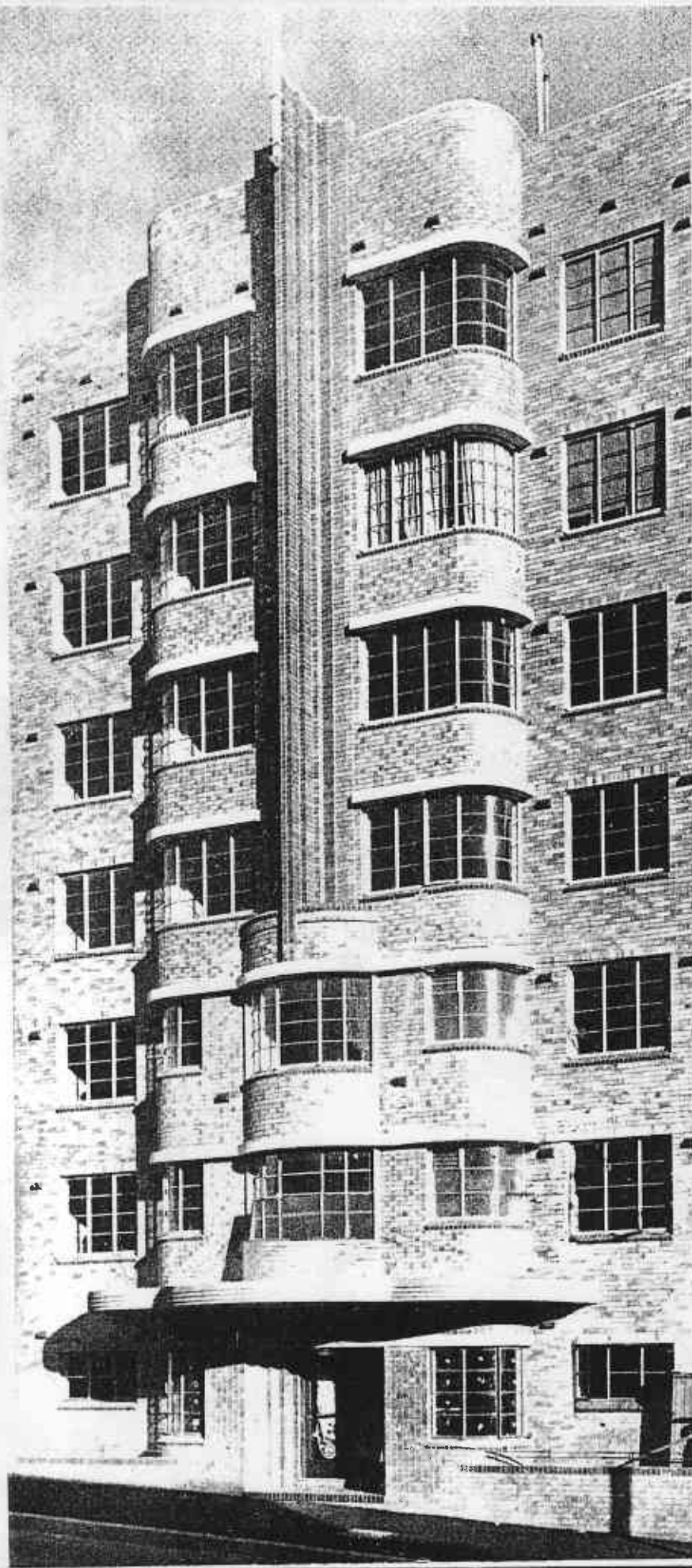
Corridor walls are textured and the ceiling is treated in the same way. The elevator door is maple, with an ornamental panel of glass. There is an electric clock immediately over the door.

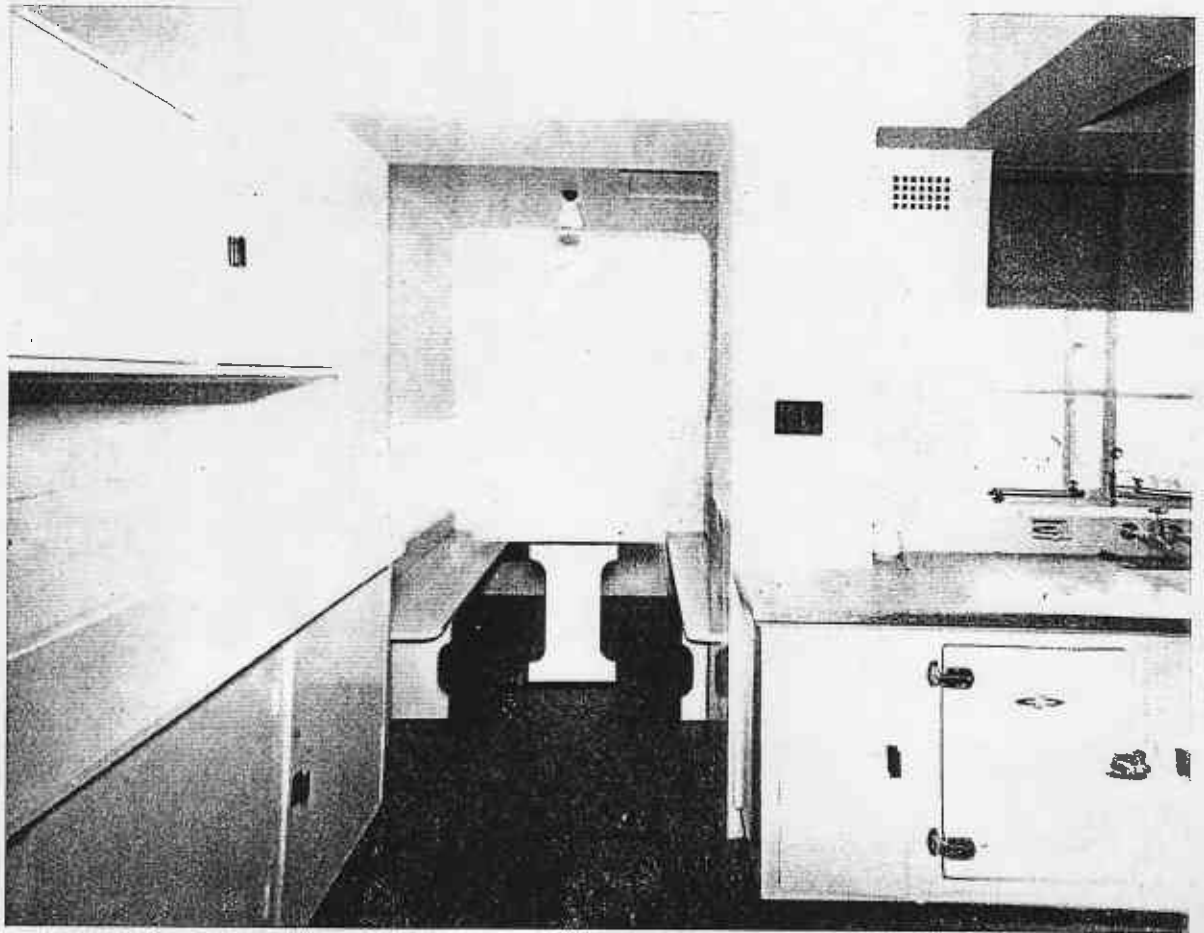
The elevator car is panelled in flush walnut veneer, with a frieze of fluted ebonised wood. The ceiling is stepped up to form a recess for the modern light fitting.

A feature has been made of the stair hall. It is lit by three panels of "Insulux" (Agee) Hollow Glass Bricks, which extend the full height of the building. Light from here is diffused along the corridor on each side.

As well as this the staircase is

Seven stories high, the building is modern in conception and designed on Continental lines. The central tower feature adds height.





■ Above: Kitchens are completely fitted with cupboards. Refrigerators are built in and cooking equipment is electrical. At left: A view showing the large expanse of parquet flooring.



further distinguished by the wrought iron balustrade, which has been treated with more individuality than usual. There is a sweep on each floor and, as the balustrade is continuous from the ground floor to the roof, there are many intricate curves in it. The top member is painted black and the remainder are picked out in cream and red. The stairs are terrazzo.

Bachelor flats consist of a bed-sitting room,

ARCHITECTS: ESMOND B. WILSHIRE &
H. R. HODGES.
BUILDERS: S. D. C. KENNEDY & BIRD PTY. LTD.
ELEVATOR & DOORS: WAYGOOD-OTIS (AUST.) PTY. LTD.
INCINERATION: MALLEYS LTD.
PARQUETRY FLOORING: GEORGE HUDSON PTY. LTD.
WROUGHT IRON RAILINGS: W. J. THOMPSON PTY. LTD.
STEEL FRAMED WINDOWS: AQUILA STEEL CO. PTY. LTD.
BUILDERS' HARDWARE: BROOMFIELDS LTD.
FLUSHING VALVES & FITTINGS: JOHN DANKS & SON
PTY. LTD.
METAL LETTERS: WUNDERLICH LTD.
GLAZING: FRANK G. O'BRIEN PTY. LTD.
"INSULUX" (AGEE) HOLLOW GLASS BRICKS: AUSTRALIAN
WINDOW GLASS PTY. LTD.
BENT GLASS: AUSTRALIAN WINDOW GLASS PTY. LTD.
ROOFING MATERIALS: JAMES HARDIE & CO. PTY. LTD.

bathroom and kitchen. The furniture is most modern. The bed in these flats is fitted with a cabinet at each end and bookshelves on the table tops formed by these cabinets. There is also an extra mattress in the lower portion of the bed. This can be drawn out to make a guest bed when desired.

A lounge and dining room in one of the larger flats is illustrated. The floor is parquet, with a flower pattern carpet over portion of it. Walls are papered in an oatmeal shade and the ceiling is quite plain as a foil for the light fitting. The minimum woodwork has been used. Skirtings are small and picture rails and architrave have been omitted altogether.

The lounge suite is green and beige and a dropside table is provided for dining. The side-

■ The lounge-dining rooms are tastefully furnished. Floors are parquet, with flower pattern carpets, and curtains and lounge suites harmonise with the colour scheme.

board is modern in design. Heating is by an electric fire.

The bedroom is carpeted on the parquet and the suite is maple. The bathroom is tiled in green and cream and the fittings are green. Floor tiles are buff.

The kitchen is electrically equipped with range, refrigerator and several smaller fittings. Built-in cupboards are a feature and a breakfast recess is also provided.

Cream wall tiles are used on the lower portion of the walls and above the plain surfaces are coloured off white. The table and fixed seats in the breakfast recess are cream, with a dark skirting. The latter is continued around all fittings and is recessed under cupboards.

Cupboards are arranged with a view to minimising work, and the black handles present a neat appearance. Windows are ample. Kitchens in the smaller flats are well equipped, but without breakfast recesses.

