

## SUMMARY OF STATE HERITAGE PLACE

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### REGISTER ENTRY

Entry in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

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**NAME:** Rogart (flats)

**PLACE NO.:** 26579

**ADDRESS:** Karna Country

4-6 Malcolm Street, Millswood

CT 6003/893 U1; CT 6003/894 U2; CT 5005/480 U3; CT 5005/481 U4;

CT 5005/482 U5; CT 5005/483 U6; CT 6003/895 COMMON PROPERTY

SP 8068 Hundred of Adelaide

### STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Rogart (flats) demonstrates an important evolution in the way South Australians lived during the twentieth century. Rogart (flats) is a high-quality example of the purpose-built flat developments that began to reshape the suburbs after the First World War, providing the middle class with a popular alternative to conventional detached housing. Designed by Adelaide architects Lawson and Cheesman and constructed in 1936, Rogart (flats) marks a turning point in the development of purpose-built interwar flats in South Australia. Rogart (flats) was the first to be designed with a 'cascading' front elevation, a feature that was widely emulated, and the first designed in a modern style, in this case, an interwar streamlined style. Rogart (flats) is an uncommon example of this new, modern way of living, as the Second World War brought a halt to the construction of dwellings. Rogart (flats) is also an outstanding example of interwar streamlined architecture articulating many of the key attributes of the style such as bold, asymmetrical massing, rounded corners, and horizontal emphasis with contrasting vertical relief.

### RELEVANT CRITERIA (under section 16 of the Heritage Places Act 1993)

**(a) *it demonstrates important aspects of the evolution or pattern of the State's history***

In the early twentieth century modern flat living emerged as an entirely new lifestyle in South Australia, albeit one predominantly for the very wealthy. The first bespoke multistorey flat complex was Dwelling – Ruthven Mansions (SHP 13368), constructed in the City of Adelaide in two stages, 1912 and 1915. The disruptive impacts of the First World War subsequently halted the further construction of flats

and only a few bespoke flats were built before the 1930s. After the war, the reconfiguration of existing homes into flats emerged as an expedient means to provide more affordable homes for people in desirable locations. However, these conversions, while conveniently located, did not necessarily provide the conveniences associated with modern living.

Purpose-built interwar flats democratised modern flat living, bringing the new lifestyle within reach of middle-income earners in line with social change. Purpose-built interwar flats responded to demand for housing in popular areas and on transport routes and represent the first wave of urban infill to occur in South Australia. The designers and financiers of purpose-built interwar flats sought to increase the number of occupants who could be housed on a suburban block while simultaneously improving the quality of life of those occupants.

Rogart (flats) marks a turning point in the development of purpose-built interwar flats in South Australia. Rogart (flats) was the first to be designed with a 'cascading' front elevation, which was widely emulated, and the first known to have been deliberately designed in a modern style, in this case, an interwar streamlined style, reflecting the promise of a 'modern' lifestyle which interwar flats offered.

Rogart (flats) demonstrates an important evolution in the way South Australian's lived in the twentieth century and the reshaping of the suburbs that began to take place in the interwar period only to be halted by the Second World War.

***(b) it has rare, uncommon or endangered qualities that are of cultural significance***

Purpose-built flats emerged during the interwar period as the first popular alternative to conventional detached housing for middle income earners. Purpose-built flats also brought profitable real estate investment within reach of the middle classes and were predominantly built as infill development to satisfy demand for modern accommodation on public transport routes and/or in desirable residential areas such as seaside suburbs. At least 50 purpose-built flat developments were built in metropolitan Adelaide and regional centres between 1912 and 1942, when the Second War World halted the construction of dwellings. It is the introduction of this new modern way of living that is considered to be of cultural significance to South Australia.

With the passage of time purpose-built interwar flats have become increasingly uncommon, as a result of their positioning on transport corridors and in seaside suburbs. These popular sites are now again prime locations for redevelopment and urban densification. Owing to such pressures, only 35 purpose-built interwar flats are known to remain. Of these 35, Rogart (flats) is one of only a few that

remains highly intact making it an uncommon example of this way of living in South Australia.

***(e) it demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics***

Rogart (flats) marks a critical turning point in the development of South Australian interwar flats, demonstrating an outstanding degree of creative accomplishment. Rogart (flats) was the first South Australian interwar flat development designed with a 'cascading' front elevation, an innovation facilitating privacy, that was widely emulated in subsequent flat developments. Rogart (flats) was the first South Australian purpose-built flat development designed in an interwar streamlined style, of which it is also considered an outstanding representative. Rogart (flats) also represents an early example of the transposition of emerging European Modernist design ideas to South Australia, which occurred in this case as a result of Cheesman's international travel to Europe and drew directly on his first-hand experience of emerging Modernism in the Netherlands.

In addition to the cascading front elevation, Rogart (flats) finely articulates many of the other key attributes of interwar streamlined architecture, namely:

- bold, asymmetrical massing of simple geometric shapes,
- clean lines, rounded corners and minimal decoration,
- plain face brick (now painted),
- horizontal emphasis, achieved through horizontally raked pointing, reinforced concrete perimeter beams, parapet walls, and cantilevered balconies;
- contrasting vertical relief, expressed through brick stairwell towers and vertically-proportioned window openings,
- internal stairs expressed externally through the presence of brick stairwell towers,
- cantilevered elements, in this instance balconies,
- corner windows,
- steel casement window frames,
- gently sloping 'flat' roofs concealed by parapets.

While a number of minor changes have occurred to Rogart (flats), most are either reversible or have had a limited impact on the architectural integrity of the place. One non-reversible change has been the removal and replacement of the original welded-steel balcony balustrades. While this change has had some impact on the architectural integrity of Rogart (flats), it has not diminished the place's architectural integrity to the extent that its heritage values can no longer be understood and appreciated.

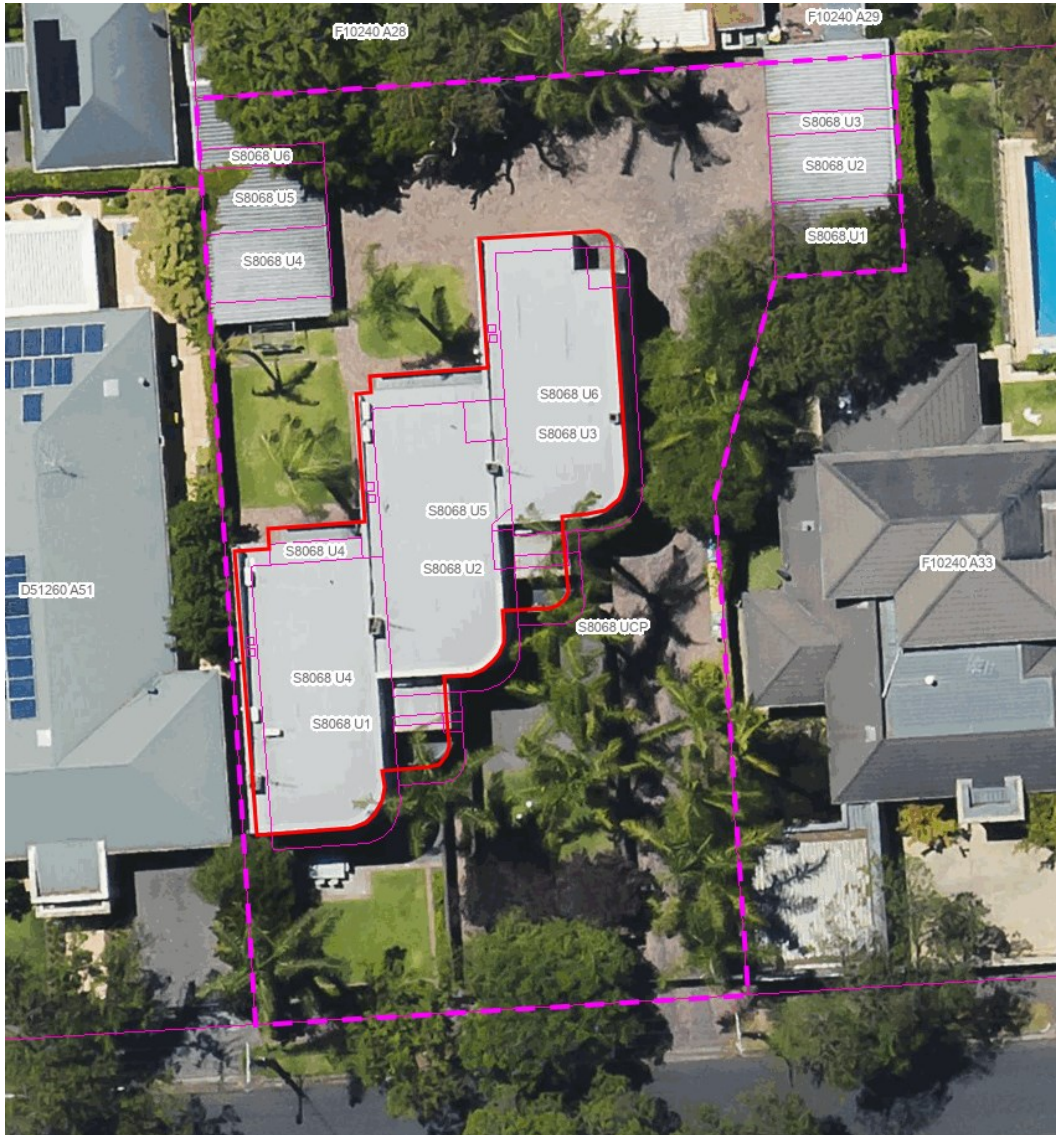
Modifications such as replacement of kitchens and bathroom fitouts and removal of site features such as laundries, drying areas, and timber-framed rear stairs have not compromised the integrity of the building's architectural expression, nor diminished its ability to illustrate the main attributes of interwar streamlined architecture.

# SITE PLAN

Rogart (flats)

PLACE NO.: 26579

4-6 Malcolm Street, Millswood



Rogart (flats) (CT 6003/893 U1; CT 6003/894 U2; CT 5005/480 U3; CT 5005/481 U4; CT 5005/482 U5; CT 5005/483 U6; CT 6003/895 COMMON PROPERTY SP 8068 Hundred of Adelaide)

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## LEGEND

-  Parcel boundaries (Indicates extent of Listing)
-  Outline of Elements of Significance for State Heritage Place

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Provisionally entered by the South Australian Heritage Council on 14 March 2024  
Confirmed by the South Australian Heritage Council on 14 November 2024

## SITE PLAN

**Rogart (flats)**

**PLACE NO.: 26579**

**4-6 Malcolm Street, Millswood**

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Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Block of flats,
- Original exterior materials, including cream brick with horizontally-raked pointing (now painted), terracotta tile and glass bricks,
- Steel window frames,
- Original layout of internal rooms,
- Original interior details, fittings and finishes where remaining, including fireplaces, built-in furniture, cornices, architraves, floorboards and doors.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

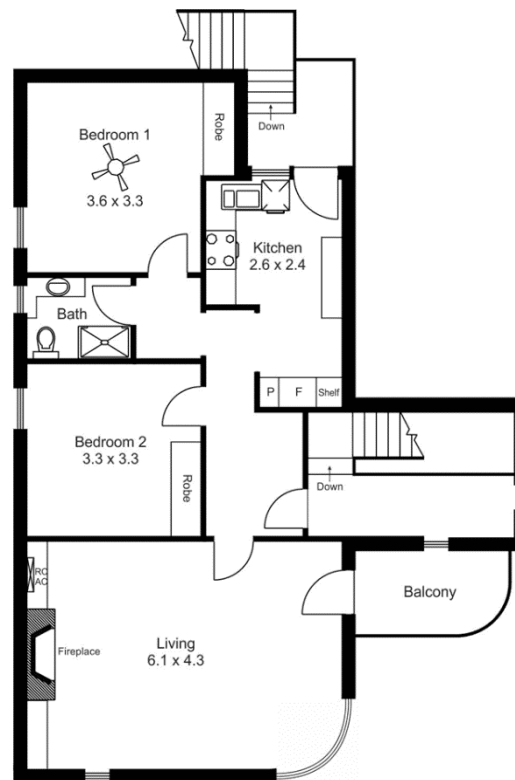
- Balcony balustrades,
- Kitchen and bathroom fitouts,
- Non-original interior paint and floor coverings,
- Reverse-cycle air conditioning units, hot water services, and television aerials,
- Trees, shrubs and landscaping,
- Garages,
- Non-original subdivision fences, street fence and security gate.

## COMMENTARY ON THE LISTING

### Description and notes with respect to a place entered in the South Australian Heritage Register in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*

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#### Physical Description



**Typical upstairs flat, Rogart (flats)**

Source: Realestate.com.au

Rogart (flats) is a two-storey block of brick and reinforced concrete flats, built on a suburban street allotment. Structurally, Rogart (flats) is constructed from load-bearing cream bricks (now painted), tied together by reinforced concrete perimeter beams which also serve as window lintels. Rogart (flats) comprises three adjoining, skillion-roofed, two-storey building units, with each unit stepped back from the street creating a 'cascading' front elevation. Each building unit is covered by a skillion roof concealed from the street by integrated parapets and has a curved south-eastern corner. The western and centre building units also possess square-footed stairwell towers, with flat roofs concealed by parapets at a lower level from the main roof and parapet. The stairwell towers are located in corners of the cascading front elevation and are structurally integrated into the main structure through the perimeter beams. Two recent garage buildings are located to the north.

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Additional exterior features include:

- steel-framed casement corner windows with terracotta-tiled sills (now painted),
- narrow, vertical window openings in eastern side of stairwell towers containing steel window frames,
- narrow, vertical window openings containing glass bricks,
- quarter-round, reinforced concrete cantilevered balconies in corners between eastern facades and stairwell towers, with steel balustrades (balustrades not original fabric),
- semi-enclosed reinforced concrete staircases in stairwell towers,
- horizontally-raked pointing,
- terracotta vents positioned at intervals,
- timber-framed sash windows on elevations facing away from street,
- semi-enclosed steel rear staircases,
- cantilevered reinforced concrete awning over door at north-eastern corner.

Original interior features include:

- coved cornices,
- fireplaces, including unpainted, glazed brick,
- built-in shelving adjacent to fireplaces,
- skirtings and architraves,
- hollow-core plywood doors,
- original fixed mirrors,
- floorboards.

### **Elements of Significance:**

Elements of heritage significance include (but are not necessarily limited to):

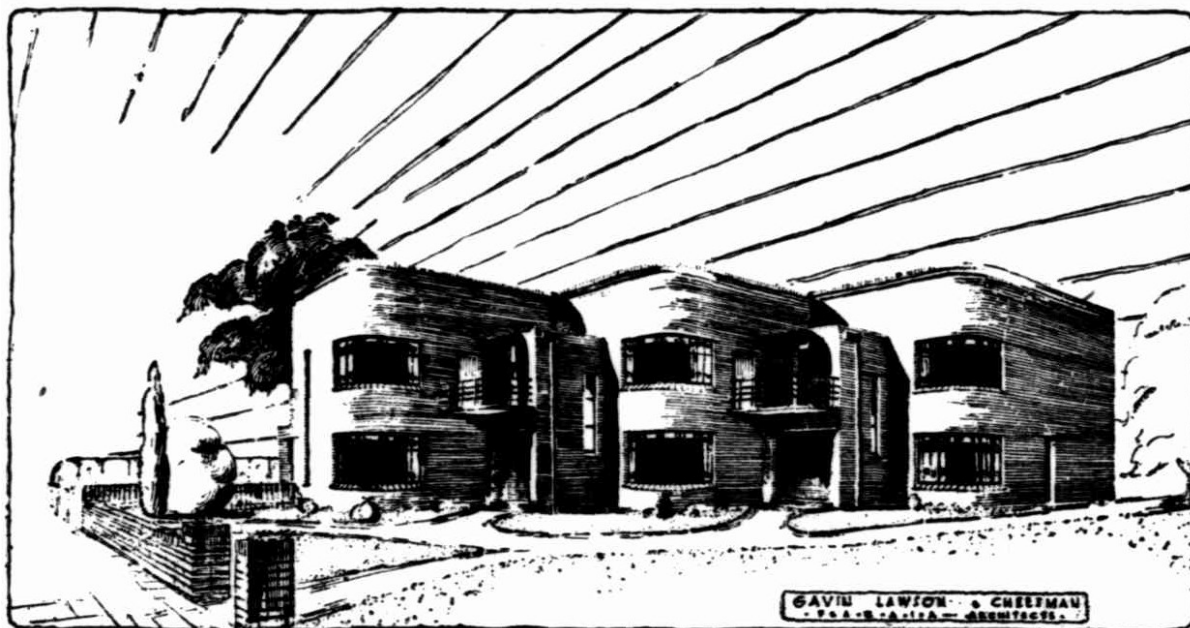
- Block of flats,
- Original exterior materials, including cream brick with horizontally-raked pointing, terracotta tile and glass bricks,
- Steel window frames,
- Original layout of internal rooms,
- Original interior details, fittings and finishes where remaining, including fireplaces, built-in furniture, cornices, architraves, floorboards and doors.

Elements not considered to contribute to significance of place include (but are not necessarily limited to):

- Balcony balustrades,
- Kitchen and bathroom fitouts,
- Non-original interior paint and floor coverings,
- Reverse-cycle air conditioning units, hot water services, and television aerials,
- Trees, shrubs and landscaping,
- Garages,
- Non-original subdivision fences, street fence and security gate.



## History of the Place

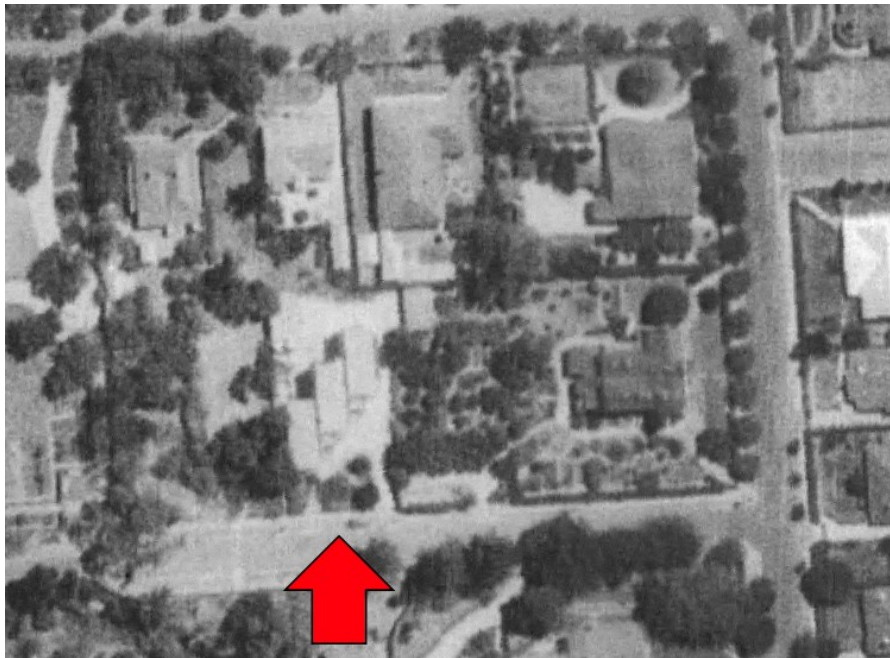


**Architect's perspective drawing of Rogart (flats)**

Source: "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood" in *Mail* 11 July 1936 p. 25

In April 1918, Stella MacKay, the wife of Broken Hill doctor John Gilbert MacKay, acquired Allotments 77-80 of Section 223, laid out as Millswood.<sup>1</sup> Six years later in 1924, John MacKay sold his Broken Hill medical practice. Afterwards, he and Stella relocated to Adelaide,<sup>2</sup> where they lived in a large house, Dwelling - 'Coonawarra' (SHP 10751), which stood on Stella's Allotments 79 and 80 at Millswood, on the corner of Malcolm and Wood Streets. Dwelling - 'Coonawarra' was built in 1898 for explorer David Lindsay, who explored 'extensively' in the Northern Territory and surveyed the town of Stuart, later known as Alice Springs.<sup>3</sup>

Rogart (flats) was designed by Adelaide architectural firm Gavin Lawson and Cheesman and built in 1936, in what was previously the back garden of Dwelling - 'Coonawarra'. While Allotments 77-80 were owned in Stella's name only, the Adelaide *Mail* newspaper implied that Rogart (flats) was commissioned by John MacKay.<sup>4</sup> Rogart (flats) was possibly named after the Highland village of Rogart in Sunderland, Scotland, reflecting John Gilbert MacKay's Scottish family background.



**Aerial view of Rogart (flats), built in the former back garden of 'Coonawarra' (large house on right), 1949.**

Source: ENVMaps

Jack Cheesman considered emerging Dutch Modernism to be 'a very beautiful and original style... simple, practical and straightforward' and drew on some of its key features in his design for Rogart, including 'elevation dealt with in mass [as] a truthful expression of the plan'; the elimination of 'petty detail'; the use of yellow brick; the use of glass brick; and a pattern to the façade, achieved through raked-out horizontal mortar joints.<sup>5</sup> The *Adelaide Mail* newspaper also reported that Rogart was 'so modern, in both plan and elevation' that the architects had 'applied for copyrights,'<sup>6</sup> however, this claim cannot be substantiated.<sup>7</sup>

Rogart (flats) was the first block of purpose-built interwar flats in South Australia to employ a 'cascading' front elevation, an innovative feature that allowed each tenant a clear view of the garden and street while affording privacy to windows and balconies through setbacks. Balconies provided additional opportunities for access to fresh air and daylight for the upstairs tenants.

Lawson and Cheesman also considered privacy by:

- designing each flat with a main entrance leading onto the central passage rather than living space;
- providing 'soundproof' concrete ceilings to the downstairs flats, with timber second-storey floors laid on top;
- arranging rooms and common stairwells to limit movement of sound between the living spaces of adjacent flats; and
- the provision of individual rear entries and staircase to the upstairs flats.

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External features in common areas included rotary clothes lines, paved drying areas and lock-up fuel bins. Laundries are understood to have been located in two freestanding garage buildings (now demolished), which provided parking space for approximately six vehicles. Some existing trees on the site were deliberately left intact, including a 'fine old fig tree' which had grown into a local landmark.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the limited available space, each flat was planned like a small house, with main rooms accessed from a central passage, meaning it was not necessary to pass through one room to reach another. The flats featured an unusually extensive suite of built-in furniture and amenities (see Table 1) , including a 'rug-box seat' and telephone table in the entry; bookshelves either side of the living room fireplaces; a linen press outside the bathroom; kitchen cupboards below a 'sanitary' terrazzo drainboard and tiled splashback; a 'cooled' pantry; a dining table with shelves above; a 'dresser unit convertible to a breakfast table'; a 'triple wardrobe' in the main bedroom; and a 'recessed' shaving cabinet.

A wall light was provided in each entry above the telephone table, with an integrated wall mirror. Two more wall lights were located in each living room to 'throw the light over the reader's shoulder' and another was provided in each main bedroom above a space intended for a dressing table, with a wall plug for a bedside reading light.

#### **Features of each flat at Rogart (flats)<sup>9</sup>**

- Rug box seat, telephone table and wall light with integrated mirror in entry
- Bookshelves flanking living room fireplace
- Two wall lights in living room
- Linen press outside bathroom
- 'Sanitary' terrazzo drainboard and tiled splashback, with cupboards below
- 'Cooled' pantry
- Dining table with shelves above
- Kitchen dresser unit convertible to breakfast table
- Trades hatch in kitchen
- Linoleum floor in kitchens
- Electric cooker
- Space for refrigerator
- Triple wardrobe in main bedroom
- Wall light in bedroom above space for dresser
- Bedside wall plug
- Second bedroom/dining room
- Tiled and coloured enamelled bathrooms
- Built-in bath and basin
- 'Instantaneous' hot water heater
- Recessed shaving cabinet
- 'Silent-flushing' cistern
- Terracotta-tiled internal passageway
- Polished hardwood floors in living areas
- 'Rolscreen' flyscreens
- 'Fireproof' concrete ceilings to downstairs flats
- Metal insulation under roofs of upstairs flats

NB. With the exception of the bookcases, most of the original built-in furniture at Rogart (flats) is understood to have been removed or replaced.

Each flat was designed as a modular unit, so that additional bays could be added, 'as far as the land permits, without any alterations to existing work.'<sup>10</sup> Unlike later flat developments such as Woodlands (1940, SHP 26299), Rogart possessed gently sloping skillion roofs, not conventional tiled, hipped roofs concealed by parapets.

Rogart (flats) is one of two examples of early South Australian Modernism selected and discussed by historian Michael Page in *Sculptors in Space: South Australian Architects 1836-1936*, a history of the architectural profession in South Australia. Page discusses Rogart (flats) and the earlier Dr A. L. Tostevin House at Medindie (1935) in the context of the firm Gavin Lawson and Cheesman's role in the emergence of modern architectural ideas during the mid-1930s in South Australia.



**Rogart (flats)**

Source: Realestate.com.au, February 2023



## Chronology

- 1918 April, Stella MacKay, wife of Broken Hill doctor John Gilbert MacKay, acquires 'Coonawarra' on Allotments 77-80 of Section 223, laid out as Millswood.
- 1924 John MacKay sells his Broken Hill medical practice and relocates to Adelaide.
- 1936 Rogart (flats) completed, to a design by Gavin Lawson and Cheesman.**
- 1997 27 June, Rogart (flats) is listed as a Local Heritage Place.**

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### **Archival**

CT 618/59

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## SITE DETAILS

Rogart (flats)

PLACE NO.: 26579

4-6 Malcolm Street, Millswood

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<b>DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:</b>	Two-storey brick and reinforced concrete flats
<b>DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:</b>	1936
<b>REGISTER STATUS:</b>	Identified 8 December 2022 Provisionally entered 14 March 2024 Confirmed 14 November 2024
<b>LOCAL HERITAGE STATUS:</b>	Listed 26 June 1997
<b>CURRENT USE:</b>	Flats 1936-Present
<b>ARCHITECT:</b>	Gavin Lawson and Cheesman 1936
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:</b>	City of Unley
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Street No.:</b> 4-6 <b>Street Name:</b> Malcolm Street <b>Town/Suburb:</b> Millswood <b>Post Code:</b> 5034
<b>LAND DESCRIPTION:</b>	<b>Title</b> CT 6003/893 U1; CT 6003/894 U2; <b>Reference:</b> CT 5005/480 U3; CT 5005/481 U4; CT 5005/482 U5; CT 5005/483 U6; CT 6003/895 COMMON PROPERTY SP 8068 <b>Hundred:</b> Adelaide



## PHOTOS

Rogart (flats)

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**Front view looking north**

Source: Realestate.com.au, November 2017



**Upstairs balcony showing horizontal raked pointing**

Source: Property.com.au, April 2020

## PHOTOS

**Rogart (flats)**

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**Rear view looking south-east**

Source: Property.com.au, December 2021



**Rear view looking south-west**

Source: Realestate.com.au, December 2019



## PHOTOS

Rogart (flats)

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**Typical living room interior showing fireplace and built-in shelving**

Source: Realestate.com.au, March 2023



**Typical living room interior showing glass bricks (on right)**

Source: Realestate.com.au, March 2023

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<sup>1</sup> CT 618/59

<sup>2</sup> "Dr. MacKay Leaving, Has Disposed of Practice" in *Barrier Miner* 9 September 1924 p. 2

<sup>3</sup> Donovan and Associates, "City of Unley Heritage Survey 1985 Re-assessment" (August 1985) p. 67

<sup>4</sup> "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood" in *Mail* 11 July 1936 p. 25

<sup>5</sup> Jack Cheesman, "Architecture and Building in Other Lands." pp. 6, 8

<sup>6</sup> "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood"

<sup>7</sup> Patents lodged in South Australia from c.1919 onward and subsequently published are discoverable online, for example AU1029319A Ernest Grant Walsh, An improved bracket for holding rods for supporting curtains and drapings (20 January 1920)

<https://patents.google.com/patent/AU1029319A/en?inventor=Grant+Walsh+Ernest>

<sup>8</sup> "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood"

<sup>9</sup> "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood"

<sup>10</sup> "Features of Modern Flats at Millswood"