

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Thurla

Address: 1 Avalon Road, Armadale

HO Reference: HO4

Citation status: Final

Date Updated: 24 October 2023

Designer: Walter Richmond Butler (Inskip & Butler)
and Arthur Peck

Year of Construction: 1906-1910

Builder: Unknown



Photograph of Thurla (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO4.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings

Heritage Type: Residence

Key Theme: Building suburbs

Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most 'designed' suburbs – houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO with tree controls.

Controls:	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tree controls
	<input type="checkbox"/> Victorian Heritage Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporated Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	<input type="checkbox"/> Prohibited uses may be permitted	<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 1 Avalon Road, Armadale (otherwise known as Thurla) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of Arts and Crafts/Art Nouveau residence is of local heritage significance, as well as the bluestone boundary wall, brick wall with flying buttresses on the eastern boundary, and remnant original cypress (*cupressus*) and cheesewood (*pittosporum*) plantings. The remainder of the landscaping, timber pergolas and swimming pool are not significant.

How is it significant?

Thurla is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Thurla has aesthetic significance as a fine, intact and early example of an Arts and Crafts dwelling with Art Nouveau influences. Designed by Walter Richmond Butler, Art Nouveau elements of aesthetic value include the rendered leaf and flower laurel decorations on the front façade surrounding two louvered vents. Other elements of notable aesthetic value include the red brick, roof form with projecting bays and terracotta tile, rendered stucco, and decorative timber work on the projecting gable end. To the north of the carport are a series of substantial flying buttresses supporting the eastern boundary wall that contribute to the setting of the site. Finally, the bluestone boundary fence fronting the southern boundary of the property contributes to the character of the dwelling on the street. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	<i>Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Thurla has aesthetic significance as a fine, intact and early example of an Arts and Crafts dwelling with Art Nouveau influences. Designed by Walter Richmond Butler, Art Nouveau elements of aesthetic value include the rendered leaf and flower laurel decorations on the front façade surrounding two louvered vents. Other elements of notable aesthetic value include the red brick, roof form with projecting bays and terracotta

		tile, rendered stucco, and decorative timber work on the projecting gable end. To the north of the carport are a series of substantial flying buttresses supporting the eastern boundary wall that contribute to the setting of the site. Finally, the bluestone boundary fence fronting the southern boundary of the property contributes to the character of the dwelling on the street.
F	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	<i>Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	<i>Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

• Physical Analysis

Thurla is a single-storey Arts and Crafts dwelling with Art Nouveau influences that also contains a two-storey extension. The tuck-pointed red brick structure is laid in a stretcher bond with a half timber gable on the street front south façade. The base of the structure is emphasised by an expressed four course open face red brick section laid in an English bond and capped with a stretcher plinth brick course. The structure presents a complex roof form with pitched and gable roofs with dormer windows clad in terracotta Marseilles tiles. There are two face brick chimneys with rendered corbels extending from the roof.

Above the masonry wall is the high-pitched, half-timber gable rendered in a roughcast beige stucco. The gable features two centered decorative Art Nouveau style mouldings framing two small louvred bull's eye vents. The mouldings terminate under the timber gable frame. The front façade features two triangular oriel windows. The windows are centred but present asymmetrically with the left window supported by a timber shingle clad and bracketed base and bracketed awning. The windows consist of a small 24-pane leadlight with a timber frame.

The main entrance is located to the left of the front facing gable and adjacent to a bull's eye window. The main entrance is raised up five steps with a brick half wall at the entrance landing. It is accessible via a stone tile path off the driveway. The pathway is framed with low boxwood hedges and agapanthus plantings. There is a raised verandah to the left of the gable with square timber posts and valance.

The north side of the structure has French doors along the ground level opening to the backyard with a covered porch. The north side features a highly pitched mansard roof with half timbered dormer windows and stuccoed partial wall. The double casement single pane dormer windows reflect the half-timber gable detailing in the front façade. Internally there are lacquered joinery, polished floors, sympathetically coloured wallpapers and a notable arboreal frieze above the dining room picture rail provide a period atmosphere.

The street front boundary of the property is demarcated by a low rough bluestone wall with black palisade fencing. The fencing is supported by stone piers, square in plan with a stone cap. The piers flanking the entrance gate features the words 'THURLA' recessed in the stone and painted white on the left pier. The right pier features the number 1 recessed and painted white and a mailbox slot. The east boundary wall is constructed in open face brick with a concrete cap. The wall is unusually high brick with concrete flying buttresses and was designed by architect, Arthur Peck.

The grounds of Thurla are landscaped with a front lawn and a pool in the backyard. The east garden by the high masonry wall has small trees and formalised underplanting. There are several mature trees on the property including a large Canary Island Palm and a line of Pencil Pine along the north boundary wall. There are two painted timber pergolas on brick piers along the front yard pathway and used for car parking and one along the swimming pool. The swimming pool area is paved with stone tiles.

Thurla's gardens were also designed by the building's architect, Walter Butler, and the mature plantings can be associated with him. These plantings include the mature cypress (*cupressus*) hedging and the cheesewood (*pittosporum*). Other plantings that have historically been associated with the site, the presence of which could not be corroborated from the public domain as part of this study, include the southern magnolia (*magnolia grandiflora*), lily pilly (*syzygium smithii*), fried egg plant (*gordonia axillaris*), rose of Sharon (*hibiscus syriacus*), camellias (*camellia*), Chinese windmill palm (*trachycarpus fortunei*), golden chalice vine (*solandra maxima*), Monterey cypress (*cupressus macrocarpa*), horse chestnut (*aesculus hippocastanum*), water gum (*tristanopsis laurina*), pear tree (*pyrus.*), rhododendron (*rhododendron cv.*), white champaca (*magnolia x alba*), and bird of paradise (*strelitzia reginae*).

Thurla is located on Avalon Road close to the junctions with Redcourt Avenue and Orrong Road. Thurla is currently used as a residential property. The property is considered in good condition. The main structure has been extended to include a double-storey mansard roof with dormer windows overlooking the backyard. The original garden structures have been removed and the original landscape has been altered. Overall, Thurla is considered to have moderate integrity.

- **Alterations and Additions**

- Upper floor addition to the dwelling.
- Original structures including the bomb shelter, aviary, glasshouse and well have been removed.
- Swimming pool added.
- Stone tiled flooring around the swimming pool added.
- Timber pergolas with brick piers.
- Three skylights added.
- Air conditioning units added to the main roof.
- New downpipes.

- Original landscape has been altered to include new walkways and plantings. Some early plantings likely removed.

History

• Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

19th

The first land sales in what would become Armadale began in 1854 following the surveying of Glenferrie Road and High Street. The suburb of Armadale was formally included in the City of Prahran and, as is the case with many of the suburbs in Stonnington and surrounds, it received its name from a lone but notable property. Armadale House was built by one James Munro, son of the first keeper of the Prahran pound. On arriving in Australia from his home in Sutherland, Scotland, Munro worked for the stationer business Fergusson and Moore—Fergusson being James Fergusson of Kooyong. Armadale House, built in c.1887, was the first of many grand houses constructed in the suburb in the late 19th century. Munro went on to become Premier of Victoria and, later, Attorney General, before losing all in the economic crash of the 1890s. Following the turn of the century, many of the original 19th century properties faced demolition and subdivision, encouraging growth in early 20th century and the interwar period. While Armadale today enjoys an affluent reputation for its association with the surrounding suburbs of Toorak, Malvern and Kooyong, traces of remnant working class houses can be seen at the small timber workers cottages present in some parts off High Street and near the border with Malvern (Cooper 1924, 268).

• Place History

Researching Thurla's history has been prone to difficulties, on account of the two past studies published in 1991 which drew conclusions on an informal interview, the outcomes of which are at odds with archival resources. A review of the Sands and McDougall Street Directories for 1900 and 1905 show that there were no properties recorded for Avalon Road, and a review of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works plan no. 998 shows that in 1901 Avalon Road was not yet subdivided (MMBW 1901). Thurla was designed by renowned Arts and Crafts architect Walter Butler, and constructed between 1906 and 1910 following the subdivision of Avalon mansion on Hampden Road. Potentially initially designed for Butler's sister, the house was sold to the Ricardo family. Miss Bertha Ricardo was recorded as still residing in the property in 1991. An air-raid shelter was constructed in the rear of the property during the second world war, and substantial buttresses were constructed to the designs of Arthur Peck in the early 20th century to support the eastern boundary wall.

The gardens are believed to have been partially designed by Walter Butler, with the remaining cypress (*cupressus*) and cheesewood (*pittosporum*) hedges planted by Butler.

Comparative Analysis

Walter Butler designed a proliferation of highly significant Arts and Crafts domestic buildings throughout the City of Stonnington. Butler himself resided at Duncraig during this period, approximately 200 metres east at 31 Hampden Road. Pensford at 528 Orrong Road was also designed by Butler, separated from Thurla by only one property to the west.

Comparable examples include:

- **Pensford (528 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO27).** Pensford is located at 528 Orrong Road, two properties west of Thurla. The house was constructed to the Arts and Crafts designs of Walter Richmond Butler in 1903, only a few years before Thurla at 1 Avalon Road. Both designed by Butler, each property shares design characteristics that link both houses to Butler. These characteristics include the use of a gabled roof form with a projecting gable decorated with art nouveau timber detailing, the mixed use of render and red brick, terracotta tiling for roof materials, and similar chimney design that utilise render and brick. Both properties are clearly recognisable as Butler designs, and with Pensford in such close proximity to Thurla, it is a perfect comparable example.
- **Edzell (76 St Georges Road, Toorak) (HO101 and VHR No. H0691).** Edzell was originally constructed in 1892 to the designs of Reed, Smart & Tappin. However, the substantial house was extensively remodeled in 1917 by Walter Richmond Butler. The Butler alterations are evident and recognisable with the use of projecting gable ends with decorative Art Nouveau timberwork, terracotta tiling and the use of render and red brick. These elements are symptomatic of Butler's Arts and Crafts designs and are reflected at Thurla, Edzell and Pensford.
- **Moorah House (13 Tintern Avenue, Toorak) (HO170).** Moorah House was designed by A.S. Eggleston following Walter Butler's subdivision of the Tintern Estate in 1902. Moorah House, though not designed by Butler, is still comparable to Thurla as an Arts and Crafts house constructed in the same period within the City of Stonnington. The house does have some differing characteristics, however clear similarities include the use of a projecting triangular bay window, the use of a projecting gable and the original use of brick and render (though it now appears to have been completely rendered).

The garden at Thurla was partially designed by Butler, and can be compared to other examples of his garden design including: Edzell at 76 St George's Road, Toorak, Duncraig at 31 Hampden Road, Armadale and Studley Flats at 398 Toorak Road, Toorak.

References

Context Pty Ltd. 2009. 'Stonnington Thematic Environmental History.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Stonnington. PDF file.

Cooper, JB. 1924. *The History of Prahran: From Its First Settlement to a City 1836–1924*. Melbourne: Modern Printing Co.

Heritage Victoria. 1999. Heritage Citation Report: Edzell, 76 St Georges Road, Toorak, Hermes ID 1167. Unpublished report. PDF file.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria). 1992. 'Classification Report: Thurla, 1 Avalon Road, Armadale'. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: Moorah House, 13 Tintern Avenue, Toorak, Hermes ID 2007. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2007. Heritage Citation Report: Pensford, 528 Orrong Road, Armadale Hermes ID 30515. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd. 1992. 'City of Prahran Significant Tree and Garden Study Volume One: Text and Illustrations, Volume Two: Tree Data Sheets, Volume Three: Garden Data Sheets.' Unpublished report prepared for City of Prahran. PDF file.

Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



Gatepost detail (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Bluestone boundary fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Façade viewed through southern hedging (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Gable and venting details (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Overview of garden, looking north west (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Overgrown buttresses on the eastern boundary (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of southern elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and Timothy Hubbard Pty Ltd, 1992.

Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.