

## Heritage Citation – Individual Place

**Heritage Place:** Pensford  
**Address:** 528 Orrong Road, Armadale

**HO Reference:** HO27  
**Citation status:** Final  
**Date Updated:** 24 October 2023

**Designer:** Walter Richmond Butler  
**Builder:** Unknown

**Year of Construction:** 1903



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



Location map and extent of HO27.

**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; tree controls are recommended in relation to the mature maple (*acer*) tree.

<b>Controls:</b>	<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 528 Orrong Road, Armadale (otherwise known as Pensford) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of Federation/Art Nouveau residence is of local heritage significance, as well as the mature maple tree and face brick boundary wall. The garage and linking structure, outbuilding and other site landscaping is not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

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

### *Why is it significant?*

Pensford has aesthetic significant as a fine, intact and early example of a Federation era dwelling with clear Art Nouveau influences designed by architect Walter Richmond Butler. Art Nouveau elements of aesthetic value include the rendered leaf and flower decorations to the tops of the chimneys, the pierced tulips in the north verandah frieze and the stylised plant forms in the parapets. Other elements of notable aesthetic value include the red brick (to both the dwelling and boundary wall), roof form with projecting bays and terracotta tile, rendered stucco and angled orientation of the building on the street corner. Finally, the maple (*acer*) tree has aesthetic value as a very large mature tree in the front setback that contributes to the character of the dwelling on the street; it was planted around the same time as the building was constructed. (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>	Pensford has aesthetic significant as a fine, intact and early example of a Federation era dwelling with clear Art Nouveau influences designed by architect Walter Richmond Butler. Art Nouveau elements of aesthetic value include the rendered leaf and flower decorations to the tops of the chimneys, the pierced tulips in the north verandah frieze and the stylised plant forms in the parapets. Other elements of notable aesthetic value

		include the red brick (to both the dwelling and boundary wall), roof form with projecting bays and terracotta tile, rendered stucco and angled orientation of the building on the street corner. Finally, the maple ( <i>acer</i> ) tree has aesthetic value as a very large mature tree in the front setback that contributes to the character of the dwelling on the street; it was planted around the same time as the building was constructed.
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

Pensford is a two-storey residence designed with both Federation and Art Nouveau influences. The building is characterised by face red brick laid in a stretcher bond. The structure presents a complex roof clad in terracotta Marseilles tiles with two central pitched roofs with flanking adjacent pitched roofs on both sides with projecting gables to the south, west and north elevations. The south elevation, facing Avalon Road, has a central two-storey gabled bay and a singlestorey gabled kitchen wing projecting to the east. The west elevation, facing Orrong Road, has a two-storey gable to the south and a parapeted projecting bay to the north with a pitched roof behind. The north elevation has a pair of gables to the projecting centre bay, with a larger gable set back to the west. A smaller gable terminates the east end of the north elevation. The house is rectangular in plan and oriented on an angle, addressing both the Avalon Road and Orrong Road fronts with the west facing façade.

The projecting bays feature a half timber gable rendered with a roughcast stucco. The Avalon Road and Orrong Road facades also feature a roughcast arched parapet with reverse curves at each end swept up to flat topped piers at the comers. The parapet is decorated with Art Nouveau style plant mouldings with characteristic whiplash form to the centre and corners. There are three open face brick chimneys with rendered corbels with terracotta chimney pots. The rendered sections of the chimneys have Art Nouveau lead and flower motifs.

The masonry walls terminate under the parapet and gables and demarcated with a moulded string course. The centre projecting bay to the north has another band of roughcast with string courses top and bottom above the ground floor windows. There are bay windows and casement windows with a timber frame and small paned leadlight glass. The windows are banked generally in groups of two or three lights, with side hung casement opening lights. Most of the windows are set to the outside face of the walls with architraves and a shallow projecting timber sill. A three-sided timber-framed bay window is cantilevered out at first floor level to the left of the north elevation. The ground floor openings feature a flat gauged arch. The detailing on the facades including the window frames, parapet mouldings, timber gable frame and string course are painted white.

The former citation noted that there is a lean-to porch to the front door on the south elevation supported on turned quasi-Tuscan columns on brick piers. This assessment has been unable to confirm the existence of this element. The street front boundary of the property is demarcated by a tall open face red brick wall with engaged piers laid in a running bond. The wall and piers are capped with a header laid course. The boundary wall is covered vines. The main entrance to the property is recessed behind the main wall and flanked with groundcover shrub plantings. There is a six-panel timber door with a brass handle, mailbox slot and name plate with painted font located in the entryway. There is a larger name plate located on the main wall with die-cast font screwed onto the black painted board that reads 'PENSFORD'. There is a paved red brick walkway from the street entrance to the main door. There is an extensive lawn along the street front sides of the property with mature trees located on site. Of particular note is a very large and mature Maple tree that stands taller than the dwelling.

There is a garage accessible from Avalon Road. The garage structure is built in a sympathetic form to the dwelling, with a similar half-timber gable front façade. The masonry structure opens up at the back and adjoins to the main house with a pitched roof clad in clear fiberglass or glass sheeting. There is an additional freestanding structure located in the garden off the north façade.

Pensford is located on the junction of Avalon Road and Orrong Road, close to the junctions with Larnook Street and Barnato Grove. Pensford is currently used as a residential property. The property is considered in good condition. The main structure has been altered and extended and would be considered to have moderate integrity.

## Alterations and Additions

- The original verandah to the northern elevation (western end) visible on the original 1903 drawings has been replaced with a skillion verandah.
- The external doors to the living room may have been moved from the west elevation to their present location on the north elevation.
- Service yard to the south east removed.
- Addition of the projecting south gable and kitchen wing.
- New French windows and steel balconette on the north façade first floor added.
- Breaks in the brickwork bond pattern and mortar colour on the west elevation to the south of the parapeted bay and to the right of the first floor bay window on the north elevation possibly indicate that alterations have occurred in these areas.
- Garage addition, with clear roof connection made to the primary dwelling.
- Replacement of boundary fence (possibly when the garage was added).
- Timber façade elements painted white (after 2017).

## 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.

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

Pensford at 528 Orrong Road was erected in 1903 to designs laid out by Walter Richmond Buttler. Trained as an architect in England, Butler was a member of the Arts and Crafts Domestic Revival movement centered around William Morris and Richard Norman Shaw. He left for Australia in 1888 and by 1895, he was appointed the architect of the Anglican diocese in Melbourne. He had a number of

architectural partnerships throughout the late 19th and early 20th century. These included G. C. Inskip between 1896 to 1905, Ernest R. Bradshaw between 1907 to 1916, his nephew Richard Butler following the First World War, and ultimately Hugh Pettit in the late 1930s (Tibbits 1903, 382). Best known for designing the Mission to Seamen building in Docklands (1916) and the extensions at Edzell Mansion in Toorak (1892), Butler's works included a large number of domestic designs, banks and churches (Goad & Willis 2012,128).

548 Orrong Road was originally designed for Walter Butler's brother Richard H Butler. Named after their birthplace Pensford village in Somerset, England, architectural drawings show a two-storey red brick and stucco Arts and Crafts style house (Butler 1903). Features included a terracotta tiled roof with a mixture of half timbered gable ends and curvilinear parapets (Butler 1903). The ground floor featured five main rooms consisting of a nursery, dining room, kitchen, drawing room, morning room, while the second floor comprised five bedrooms and two bathrooms (Butler 1903). A MMBW Plan from 1904 also shows a service yard connected to the south east corner, and a porch within the parapeted bay to the west elevation (MMBW 1904).

While it is not known which year Richard Butler and his family commenced occupancy at Pensford, a newspaper article indicates that they had settled in by at least 1915 (The Age 1915, 11). Occupants during this initial period included Richard Butler, his wife Maud (née Austin) and children (The Australasian 1916, 28). Their children included architect Austin Richard Butler (b. 1892), accountant Richard Harry Butler (b. 1886) and Max Butler (b. unknown). Max Butler served with the 8th Hampshire Regiment during the First World War, and subsequently fought in Cairo during the Battle of the Wazzir (The Prahan Telegraph 1917, 4). The Butler family occupied Pensford for several decades, before a transfer of ownership. The last known occupant was L.H. Mohr in 1974 (Sands & McDougall 1974). Due to the lack of archival material, the history of the house from the mid to late twentieth century largely remains unknown. It has undergone several alterations and additions in more recent times, and property records indicate that it was last sold in 2013.

### Comparative Analysis

The following comparative analysis is largely based on the earlier comparative analysis prepared by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Updated and new content has been included by Extent Heritage as required.

Walter Butler's work was diverse, covering shops, warehouses, hospitals, ecclesiastical buildings, office buildings, banks and urban planning. However, the majority of his work was largely residential (Goad & Willis 2012, 128). Butler was a notable member of the group of architects in Melbourne who promoted a range of red-brick styles from the 1880s until the 1900s, all based on Arts and Crafts ideals and deriving ultimately from English Domestic Revival sources. These styles included the domestic Queen Anne style. Butler's domestic work was generally for wealthy clients and much was in the Toorak and Armadale areas. His work was always distinctive and his houses before about 1905 in particular reflect his English training and association with the leading English Arts and Crafts, designers Ernest Gimson and W. R. Lethaby. His later houses display increasing American influence.

The relatively simplified form and decorative details of Pensford, in comparison with Walter Butler's earlier houses and the domestic Queen Anne style, are early manifestations of the post-Federation shift to more plain and 'natural' styles. Reaction to earlier styles was signalled by Butler's complaint in 1902 of

being 'heartily sick of Queen Anne' and by Beverley Usher's call in 1907 for a 'stronger type of house' (Tibbits 1982). The shift in styles included a new range of American influences, seen for example in Butler's later houses such as Warrawee (now demolished; 1906; 735 Orrong Road, Toorak) and Studley (HO108; 1910; 392-400 Toorak Road, Toorak). In comparison with these houses, Pensford can be seen as transitional between the largely English Vernacular Revival style of the earlier houses and the later American influences. It was part of a notable attempt by Butler and other architects to create a distinctly Australian genre.

Many of Butler's houses of this period, and particularly his Western District houses, modified their English characteristics by their expansive planning and use of Australian elements such as verandahs and balconies. Thurla, built next door to Pensford apparently the year before, has a virtually identical brick, roughcasted and half-timbered treatment, but is planned as bungalow. Although in terms of rateable value a smaller house than Pensford, it occupies a significantly larger land area. In this context, the compact double storied form of Pensford makes it one of Butler's most English styled designs of this period, and one of the least adapted to local styles.

Use of Art Nouveau decoration on buildings in Australia appears to date from the late 1890s, as for example in the Friendly Societies' Dispensary, Geelong by Laird and Barlow, 1898. Art Nouveau elements, both in metalwork and relief mouldings, were used in buildings predating Pensford, including Milton House (HO637; c.1900; 25 Flinders Lane, Melbourne) and Eastbourne House (HO2; c.1900; 62 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne), both by Sydney Smith. The Art Nouveau elements of Pensford are seen mainly in the west elevation parapet, in the rendered leaf and flower decorations to the tops of the chimneys, and in the pierced tulips in the north verandah frieze. The parapet has a curved top and is decorated with stylised representations of plant forms with characteristic whiplash form.

Comparative examples of Walter Butler's Art Nouveau designs include:

- **Thurla (HO4) (1 Avalon Road, Armadale).** Pensford and Thurla are notable as early examples of Butler's short lived interest in Art Nouveau decoration. These two buildings appear to be his first use of this style. In both buildings, the Art Nouveau elements are isolated decorative features. At Thurla, paired oculi vents above the windows in the front gable are surrounded by characteristically sinuous leaf forms growing out of stylised trunks and roots.
- **Billilla House & Garden (HO188) (26 Halifax Street, Brighton).** Art Nouveau in Butler's work was also culminated in his remodelling of Billilla in 1905, the year after Pensford was built. This large Italianate house, built in 1876, was refaced and enlarged, and extensive use was made of Art Nouveau decorative forms in the rendered wall surfaces, particularly to the tower and the parapets to the main building, as well as to the stylised Corinthian columns to the front porch.



## References

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## 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



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



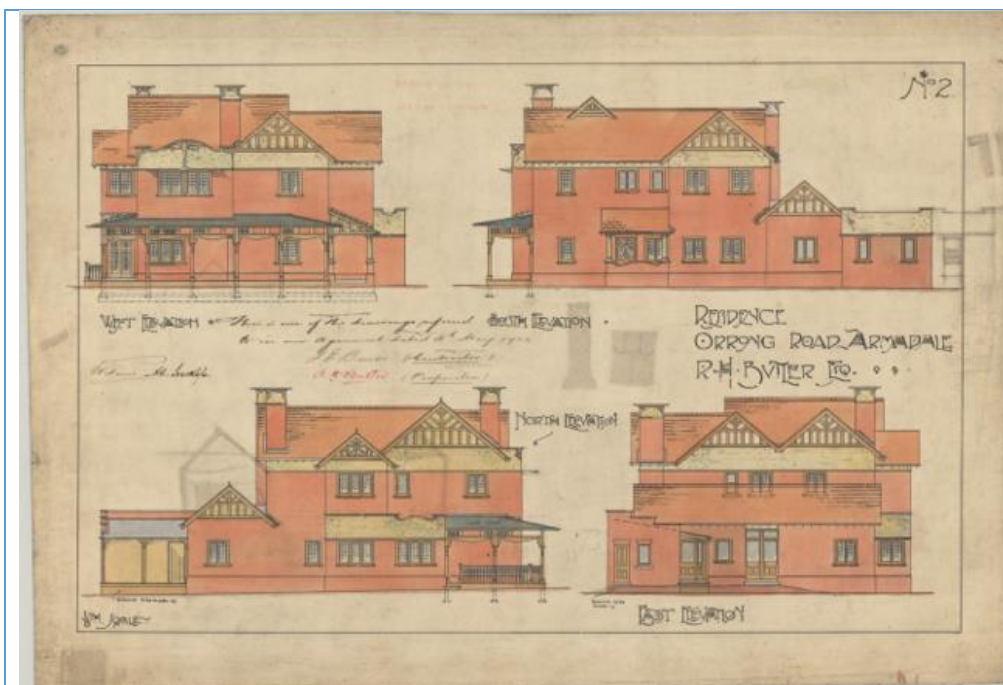
Western elevation and boundary fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



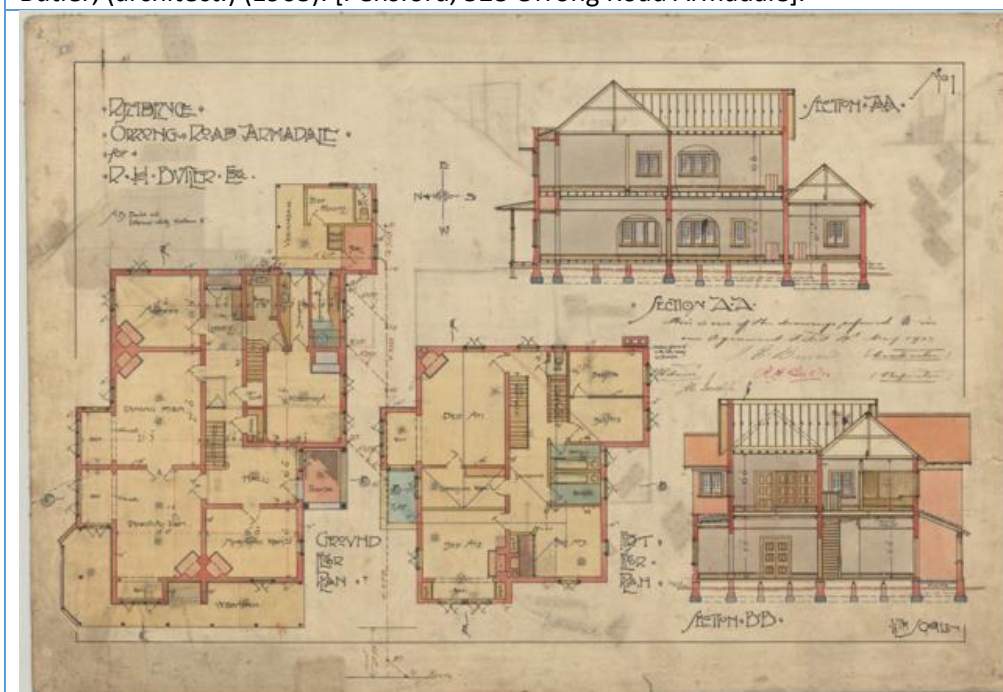
Overview of the property, showing the mature (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Pedestrian entrance. Source: Google streetview (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Original 1903 drawings of Pensford. Butler, Walter Richmond & Bruce, J. E., (contractor.) & Inskip & Butler, (architect.) (1903). [Pensford, 528 Orrong Road Armadale].



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## Authors

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