

## Heritage Citation – Individual Place

**Heritage Place:** Trelowarren  
**Address:** 543 Orrong Road, Armadale

**HO Reference:** HO86  
**Citation status:** Final  
**Date Updated:** 25 October 2023

**Designer:** George Raymond Johnson  
**Builder:** Unknown

**Year of Construction:** 1877



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



Location map and extent of HO86.

**Heritage Group:** Residential buildings  
**Heritage Type:** Mansion

**Key Theme:** Building Suburbs  
**Key Sub-theme:** Creating Australia's most prestigious suburbs – seats of the mighty – mansion estates in the 19th century

**Significance Level:** Local

**Recommendation:** Retain as an individually significant place on the HO; tree controls recommended for two mature ombu (*Phytolacca dioica*) and kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*)

<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 543 Orrong Road, Armadale (otherwise known as Trelowarren) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, setback and detailing of the substantial 1877 boom era Italianate mansion is locally significant, along with the two remnant plantings including a ombu (*Phytolacca dioica*) and kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*). The front fence is of contributory value. Later alterations and additions are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

Trelowarren is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

Trelowarren is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of mansions on estates in the suburb of Armadale during the 19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the gold rush period. (Criterion A)

Trelowarren demonstrates the principal design characteristics attributed with late Victorian mansions. These include the use of slate, a hipped roof form, stucco render, a wrought iron lacework verandah and Italianate chimney capping. (Criterion D)

Trelowarren has aesthetic significance as a highly intact and fine example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion set on a substantial portion of land. Designed by architect George Raymond Johnson, noted aesthetic features include the wraparound wrought iron verandah, projecting bays, slate roof and conservatory. The mansion is a landmark property on Orrong Road, particularly owing to its scale, deep setback and high visibility. The place is also of aesthetic significance for the remnant Victorian plantings present onsite. These include two mature ombu (*Phytolacca dioica*) and kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*) trees. (Criterion E)

## HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Trelowarren is of historical significance in demonstrating the development of mansions on estates in the suburb of Armadale during the 19th century, prior to the wider subdivision of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development in the south eastern suburbs by Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the gold rush period.
B	<i>Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.

<i>C</i>	<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.
<i>D</i>	<i>Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments</i>	Trelowarren demonstrates the principal design characteristics attributed with late Victorian mansions. These include the use of slate, a hipped roof form, stucco render, a wrought iron lacework verandah and Italianate chimney capping.
<i>E</i>	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	<p>Trelowarren has aesthetic significance as a highly intact and fine example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion set on a substantial portion of land. Designed by architect George Raymond Johnson, noted aesthetic features include the wraparound wrought iron verandah, projecting bays, slate roof and conservatory. The mansion is a landmark property on Orrong Road, particularly owing to its scale, deep setback and high visibility.</p> <p>The place is also of aesthetic significance for the remnant Victorian plantings present onsite. These include two mature ombu (<i>Phytolacca dioica</i>) and kauri pine (<i>Agathis robusta</i>) trees.</p>
<i>F</i>	<i>Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period</i>	This place does not meet this criterion.
<i>G</i>	<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.
<i>H</i>	<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

Trelowarren is a large two-storey Victorian Italianate mansion with a double hipped roof and projecting bays on the north and east façades. The structure is rendered and painted a muted yellow. The street front east façade is defined by the projecting bay with bay Venetian windows on the ground and first floors. To the right of the bay is a covered verandah that wraps around to the south façade. The verandah on the south façade projects in a half-hexagonal form typical of the Italianate style with a corresponding projection on the main structure and roof. The verandah is supported by round timber posts supporting a cast iron lace and valance. The cast iron detailing includes stylised flower and vines forming the design of the lacework. The first-floor verandah balustrades are cast iron lace in a similar design. The verandah post and detailing are painted white which contrasts the muted yellow structure. The roof is clad in slate tiles and painted red metal ridge capping. There are two corbelled rendered chimneys extending from the roof of the main structure.

The bay Venetian windows are framed by Corinthian style pilasters with smaller half round Corinthian style detailing on the edges of the main pilaster. The windows have a Tudor arch style moulding painted light grey with a gauged arch in the form of the Tudor arch. The rest of the structure has large rectangular form windows with corresponding Tudor arched moulding and gauged arch detailing. All the windows have a yellow timber double hung sash window.

There are several extensions to Trelowarren. There is a gabled roof single-storey free standing structure to the south of the main structure that has since been connected to the main dwelling. The front façade of the south structure has a pedimented parapet with string course and a set of paired centred windows in a similar style to the windows on the main structure. The render, colour, façade detailing and roof clad are sympathetic to the main structure. The structure has a smaller lean-to roof extension to its south elevation from which a rendered corbelled chimney extends from. In addition to the extension connecting the two structures, there is a single-storey extension to the west back side of the smaller structure. The main structure has a twostorey extension to the west and a single-storey extension of the north west façade. The extensions are clad in corrugated galvanised iron.

The main structure is set back from the Orrong Road. The street front boundary is demarcated by a green timber post and white picket fence. The concrete laid driveway and edging curves from the southeast extent of the site and terminates at the north façade of the main structure. Aerial imagery shows the grounds of Trelowarren to have extensive expanses of lawn particularly on the east and west of the side. There are several mature trees on the site. This includes a rare mature ombu (*Phytolacca dioica*) tree, an evergreen tree from South America that dates from the Victorian era. There is a large water tank and garden beds in the south east corner of the site. There is a small circular garden bed in the front of the main structure which was part of a larger landscaped area that has since been removed.

Trelowarren is located on Orrong Road and close the commercial precinct on High Street. It is currently used as a mental health facility managed by Mind Australia. Trelowarren is considered to be in good condition and has moderate integrity overall.

### • Alterations and Additions

- Red metal roof ridge cap added.

- One skylight added to north projecting hipped roof.
- Curved industrial air vent added to south side of the roof the main structure.
- Extensive façade refurbishment work (2019).
- Verandah timber deck refurbished (2019).
- New timber verandah posts added (2019).
- Verandah detailing repainted white (2019).
- New verandah corrugated galvanised iron roof cladding (2019).
- Freestanding additional structure sympathetic in colour and detailing.
- Single-storey west extension to south structure (between 2006 and 2009).
- Double-storey west extension to west of main structure.
- Single-storey north west extension to main structure.
- Concrete laid driveway and parking area (after 2006).
- Water tank and productive garden beds (between 2006 and 2009)
- Landscaping removed from street front lawn (2018)

## 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

In May 1876, the prominent Melbourne architect George Raymond Johnson, called tenders for the erection of a villa residence for R. D. Reid, Esq (The Argus 1876, 3). Johnson was a well-regarded architect, noted for his designs for town halls, hotels, theatres, commercial buildings and houses in Melbourne and its suburbs from the 1860s to the 1880s (Johnson and Tibbits 2005).

The following year, in 1877, Robert D. Reid was rated as the owner/occupier of a brick house of ten rooms on four acres of land in Orrong Road (NAV 150 pounds) (Pahran Rate Book 1877). Reid also owned four acres of land with a four-roomed wooden house off High Street (Pahran Rate Book 1976). By 1878, Reid was rated for the house on the site of 543 Orrong Road described as an eleven room brick house on eight acres (Pahran Rate Book 1878). Later, in the 1880s, Reid's residence was described as a twelve room house (Pahran Rate Book 1885-86).

Although Caroline Reid continued to live there at the turn of the century, the property was owned by John J. Falconer, manager (Pahran Rate Book 1900-01). MMBW drainage plan shows the mansion house at this time, then known as Kilbryde, with an aviary and conservatory at the southern end of its extensive grounds and an orchard at the rear (MMBW, 1900). A single-storey rendered addition to the south of the building consists of a rendered façade with pediment form for the parapet wall.

By 1950, ownership of Kilbryde was taken up by the Government and transformed into a rehabilitation centre, providing security and a base to members of the community in need of its support (The Argus 1950, 8). According to newspaper articles, it was known as 'Trelowarren' from this point.

Although the grounds are much reduced today, some unusual garden plantings survive which appear to date from the Victorian era. Evidence of a circular garden bed is visible in the lawn in front of the house. A specimen of ombu (*Phytolacca dioica*), situated to the north of the house, is of local significance for its age and size, contributing to the streetscape, and forming a local landmark. In addition, another Victorian tree, a specimen of kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*) survives.

Trelowarren is historically important as one of five substantial mansions constructed between 1877 and 1889 for a group of prosperous Melbourne professional men in the block in Orrong Road between Dandenong Road and High Street. MMBW . drainage plans dated 1900 show these buildings in their prime in their splendid Victorian garden settings on large allotments ranging from three to eleven acres. Today only four of those mansions still remain. They are:

- Trelowarren, formerly Kilbryde (543 Orrong Road, Armadale), built in 1876-77 for Robert D. Reid, merchant and member of the Victorian Legislative Council, later becoming a Senator.
- Larnook (519 Orrong Road, Armadale), built in 1881 for W. H. Miller, banker, son of Henry "Money" Miller. Recorded by National Trust.
- Former Sebrof House (514 Orrong Road, Armadale), built circa 1884 for William Williams, merchant, and later owned by the Forbes family who renamed it Sebrof.
- Redcourt (506 Orrong Road, Armadale), built in 1888 for Edward Yencken, merchant.

Two additional mansions to add to this group, now demolished, are:

- Karbarook, which was the home from 1881 of the distinguished barrister and politician Thomas Turner à Beckett, M.L.C.
- Lalbert, constructed in 1880 for auctioneer and Melbourne City councillor Cornelius Job Ham..

### Comparative Analysis

In Armadale, there are remnant examples of large Victorian mansions reflecting the local suburbs affluent history. Though these residences no longer grace manicured gardens set on acreage, they still represent a period of booming development and affluence in Armadale. Trelowarren can be directly

compared to four of these mansions; three that are on Orrong Road, as well as an additional mansion nearby on Elgin Street.

Comparative examples include:

- **Former Sebrof House (514 Orrong Road) (HO84).** Built c.1884 for merchant William Williams, the house would later be owned by the Forbes family who renamed it Sebrof. Former Sebrof House is directly comparable to that Trelowarren as both houses are key examples of boom era Italianate mansions built on large estates in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on Orrong Road, Armadale. Former Sebrof House directly reflects a period of rich development and expansion, informing Trelowarren's construction and providing a remnant landscape context for Trelowarren. Today, both houses provide historical evidence of Armadale prior to the subdivision of the 19<sup>th</sup> century estates.
- **Larnook (519 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO85).** Built in 1881 for W. H. Miller, banker and son of Henry "Money" Miller, Larnook is comparable to Trelowarren as a late 19<sup>th</sup> century boom era Italianate mansion formerly on a large estate. Like Former Sebrof House, Larnook contextualises the historical setting of Trelowarren and provides evidence of an Orrong Road streetscape that no longer exists.
- **Redcourt (506 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO166).** Redcourt was built in 1888 for Edward Yencken, merchant, and shares a boundary with Trelowarren. Though architecturally different, Redcourt is still directly comparable to Trelowarren as a boom era mansion built on Orrong Road in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and formerly located on a large estate.

Overall, Redcourt, Trelowarren, Larnook and Former Sebrof House can be understood as a collection of remnant boom era mansions, contextualising the development of Orrong Road between Dandenong Road and High Street prior to the subdivision of the late Victorian estates in Armadale. The four surviving mansions, however, no longer stand in their Victorian gardens and their grounds have been drastically reduced by the subdivisions which created Karbarook, Larnook and Lalbert Crescents on the west side and Redcourt Avenue.

One additional site worth noting for its comparable value is:

- **R.C. Church Seminary & Offices (21 Elgin Avenue, Armadale) (HO36).** The Roman Catholic Seminary, formerly known as Elgin, is directly comparable to Trelowarren as a boom era Italianate mansion located between High Street and Dandenong Road. Elgin and Trelowarren are architecturally similar, sharing a similar form and verandah design, but are also historically similar as remnant boom era mansions reflecting a history that predates the subdivision of the late Victorian estates in Armadale.



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*The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957)* 10 May 1876: p. 3.

*The Argus (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957)* 20 February 1950: p. 8.

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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



Looking north west at Trelowarren (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Looking south west at Trelowarren and associated plantings (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of Trelowarren's verandah (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Close up view of conservatory (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Looking north west at the eastern bay 9source:  
Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Looking south west at the eastern bay (source:  
Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

## Authors

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