

## Heritage Citation – Individual Place

**Heritage Place:** Residence  
**Address:** 12 Mercer Road, Armadale

**HO Reference:** HO328  
**Citation status:** Final  
**Date Updated:** 2 November 2023

**Designer:** Arthur Fisher (possibly)  
**Builder:** Unknown

**Year of Construction:** 1899



Photograph of 12 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO328.

**Heritage Group:** Residential Buildings  
**Heritage Type:** House

**Key Theme:** Building suburbs  
**Key Sub-theme:** Middle class suburbs and the suburban ideal

**Significance Level:** Local

**Recommendation:** Retain as an individually significant place on the HO.

<b>Controls:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> External paint colours	<input type="checkbox"/> Internal alterations	<input 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 12 Mercer Road, Armadale is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the Victorian era dwelling with Medieval/Free Style influences is of local heritage significance. The timber front fence is contributory. The landscaping and later alterations and additions are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

12 Mercer Road is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

Aesthetically, 12 Mercer Road is distinguished by its remaining medieval-inspired detailing. It is a style that sets the building apart from the prevailing fashions of the Victorian era. Elements of note include the front bay window with a separate hipped roof and decorative timber joinery. Other aspects that contribute to the aesthetic value of the dwelling include the hipped slate roof with a projecting gable and the tuck-pointed brickwork. The building also has aesthetic significance as part of a row of three closely related dwellings at 12-16 Mercer Road, all originally built in the same style. (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>	Aesthetically, 12 Mercer Road is distinguished by its remaining medieval-inspired detailing. Elements of note include the front bay window with a separate hipped roof and decorative timber joinery. Other aspects that contribute to the aesthetic value of the dwelling include the hipped slate roof with a projecting gable and the tuck-pointed brickwork. The building also has aesthetic significance as part of a row of three closely related dwellings at 12-16 Mercer Road, all originally built in the same style.

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

12 Mercer Road is a single-storey Victorian house with Medieval/Free Style influences. It is a tuck-pointed red brick structure laid in a running bond. The double fronted façade has a projecting gable roof with a simplified timber barge board (replaced) and a secondary projecting hip roof over a window bay. The front gable is capped with a ram's horn finial. The bay has two double hung timber sash windows with a fixed arched leadlight stained-glass window with arched brick window heads. The structure has a slate roof with a metal roof ridge cap. There are two face brick corbelled chimneys with stainless steel chimney caps.

The front façade has a raised covered porch with corrugated galvanized iron roofing, turned timber verandah posts and valance. The three-pane timber front door has symmetrical two-pane sidelights.

The grounds of 12 Mercer Road are heavily landscaped. There is an extensive back yard with lawn and boxwood hedge, and a swimming pool. There is a paved seating area by the pool and main house. The front yard is predominantly laid in brown aggregate with inground planter beds along the front and side fence, and by the front of the house with standard evergreens and white roses. The street boundary is demarcated by white timber post and picket fence. The driveway is laid in the same aggregate and terminates at the skillion roof garage located in the back yard.

There are several extensions on the property including a freestanding granny flat in the backyard. Historical imagery shows that there has been a side extension on the north elevation where a side entrance was once located.

12 Mercer Road is located close to the main commercial precinct on High Street, Armadale Train Station and the Mercer Road Tram stop. 12 Mercer Road is currently used as a residential property and is considered to be in good condition. There have been extensions and additions at the rear and side, extensive alteration to the landscape and removal of original detailing. However, the primary built/roof form, original front facing openings and much of the joinery remain intact. 12 Mercer Road would be considered to have moderate integrity.

- Alterations and Additions

- North elevation side extension (after 2013).
- Freestanding extension by the back of the house (after 2000).
- Addition of skillion roof garage (2018).
- Addition of sections of new corrugated iron roof on the main structure.
- Metal roof ridge cap.
- Replacement of bargeboard.
- Addition of stainless steel chimney caps.
- Alteration of the decorative joinery to the verandah, inclusive of removal of original gableton as seen on neighbouring matching properties.
- Removal of the original finials.
- Removal of brick boundary fence - built 1969.
- New timber post and picket boundary fence added – it matches 14 and 16 Mercer Road.
- Addition of a swimming pool (after 2010).
- Addition of paved seating area in the backyard (after February 2017).
- Removal of front lawn, planting and tiled walkway (2016).
- Addition of peddle laid front yard and driveway (2016).
- Demolition and replacement of old skillion style shed (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

Erected in 1899 for prominent Australian mining magnate Anthony Edward Bowes Kelly, better known as Bowes Kelly, 12 Mercer Road comprises one of three identical brick houses (12, 14 and 16) that were built in a row towards the south end of Mercer Road, Armadale (then Malvern). While the architect has not been verified, these three dwellings were possibly constructed to designs laid out by architect Arthur Fisher (Nigel Lewis & Richard Aitken Pty 1992). A local in the area at 1 Sorrett Avenue, Fisher is noted for designing the medieval inspired half timbered dwelling Westford at 2 Ash Grove Malvern.

In 1897, Bowes Kelly is listed as the owner of a 249 foot allotment that 12, 14 and 16 Mercer Road would come to occupy (Malvern Rate Books 1897-98). A pastoralist and land speculator throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Kelly purchased a one-fourteenth share in the new Broken Hill Mine in 1884 following news of silver discoveries in the Barrier Ranges (Wheeler 1983). He went on to sit on the board of directors from 1885 and by 1893, he was both the director and principal shareholder of Mount Lyell Mining and Railway Co. Ltd (Wheeler 1893). He lived in the dwelling Waioira at Glenferrie Road, Malvern from 1888 before moving to the mansion Moorakynne, also in Malvern in 1901.

Kelly was a keen property investor and developer throughout the 1890s, and 1899 saw the construction of three houses on his allotment at Mercer Road. Comprising of ten rooms, 12 Mercer Road was initially leased to estate agent Frederick Skipper (Malvern Rate Book 1898-1899). A MMBW plan from 1902 shows one bathroom, as well as steps leading into the dwelling's front entrance (MMBW 1902). By 1905, Dr Edward Leslie Gault, a medical practitioner from England, is listed as the official occupant of the house (Sands & McDougall 1905). A pioneer eye specialist and devout methodist, Gault founded the Laymen's Missionary Movement in 1909, as well as the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1926 (Parry 2007; The Herald 1954, 13). He occupied the house with his children and wife Gertrude (née Woodall), who ultimately passed away in 1906 (The Argus 1906, 11). According to a newspaper article the house was referred to as Deloraine during the Gault occupancy (The Argus 1905, 1).

The Gault family continued to occupy the house until at least 1910, and by 1915, E.T. Hart is listed in directories as the occupant (Sands & McDougall 1915). While it remains unknown if the property was still under the ownership of Kelly by this period, directories throughout the early to mid 20th century indicate a long period of occupation by the Fordyce family. Occupied by Mr and Mrs. J Fordyce from 1924, and then Flora Fordyce throughout the 1940s and 50s, their intergenerational occupancy of 12 Mercer Road would suggest that the family also owned it. The Fordyce family went on to rename the house Alvie, and documented social events during their occupancy include a wedding reception for Janet Fordyce, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J Fordyce, and Bruce Henderson in 1924 (Chronicle 1924, 65).

By 1965, Mrs. E. Goldring is listed as the official occupier. While records suggest that she lived there for at least a decade, architectural drawings indicate that ownership of the house fell under G. Manton by 1969 (Sands & McDougall 1965-1974; Palliser Associates 1969). A new brick fence and gate was also installed during Manton's ownership, although it has since been demolished (Palliser Associates 1969). Ownership of the house subsequently changed hands four times throughout the late and early 21st century, with several more alterations and additions also taking place between this period.

## Comparative Analysis

The following comparative analysis focuses on a range of dwellings located in the City of Stonnington that share stylistic similarities to 12 Mercer Road, as Victorian houses with Medieval influences. Many of the dwellings were built as investment properties for Bowes Kelly. Further, while the architect has not been verified for a number of these sites, the similarities in the dwellings indicates that they were possibly constructed to designs laid out by architect Arthur Fisher.

The selected houses were designed in an eclectic manner with a medieval character to the gable facing the street and secondary projecting gable roof over a window bay. The medieval character is further reinforced with the entry gableton verandah on some examples. The steep pitched roofs, tall chimneys and the lack of stucco ornamentation on these red face brickwork buildings represents a rejection of the Italianate and the more flamboyant Queen Anne styles.

Comparative examples include:

- **14 Mercer Road, Armadale (HO329).** Constructed at the same time as 12 Mercer Road in 1899, owned by Bowes Kelly and potentially designed by Arthur Fisher. It is slightly more favourable to 12 Mercer Road in terms of intactness, with the decorative barge board to the gable end remaining in place. Like 12 Mercer Road, it contains a sympathetic timber front fence. Both dwellings have had red brick extensions added to the northern elevation towards the front façade and extensive relandscaping. Key similarities include the overall built/roof form, arrangement/style of openings, projecting bay window and insertion of a sympathetic timber front fence.
- **16 Mercer Road, Armadale (HO330).** Constructed at the same time as 12 Mercer Road in 1899, owned by Bowes Kelly and potentially designed by Arthur Fisher. This building compares favourably in terms of intactness to 12 Mercer Road. It is also missing the decorative barge board to the gable end but it retains other key features such as the ornamental gableton to the verandah. Key similarities include the overall built/roof form, arrangement/style of openings, projecting bay window and insertion of a sympathetic timber front fence.
- **5 Myamyn Street, Armadale (HO331).** Originally owned by Bowes Kelly and built in 1896 to designs potentially by Arthur Fisher. This building compares favourably in terms of intactness to 12 Mercer Road. It is also missing the decorative barge board to the gable end but retains the ornamental gableton to the verandah and more finely detailed timber joinery such as that to the bay window. Unlike 12 Mercer Road, this building has a high brick fence screening some of the façade.
- **7 Myamyn Street, Armadale (HO538).** Originally owned by Bowes Kelly and also built in 1896 to designs potentially by Arthur Fisher. This dwelling is more intact than 12 Mercer Road, having retained its decorative timber joinery to the gable end. Like 12 Mercer Road, it contains a low timber picket boundary fence. The projecting bay window detailing is less restrained in its style and more finely detailed than at 12 Mercer Road.
- **Norwood (133 Manning Road, Malvern East) (HO552).** Designed by Arthur Fisher and built in 1889. Both buildings are tuck pointed. Norwood is slightly more intact to the façade with the decorative barge board remaining and the additions have been pushed to the rear of the site. Both buildings present as more simplified in their style than other comparable examples.



Compared to the above properties, 12 Mercer Road is not the most intact example a Victorian house with Medieval/Free Style influences and is more simplified in its detailing. Despite this, it is still considered an important example as one part of a group of three medieval style properties attributed to Bowes Kelly.

## 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



Overview of the dwelling and front fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Overview of the dwelling (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of the front fence (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Side extension located at the front of the property (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

## Authors

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