

## Heritage Citation – Individual Place

**Heritage Place:** Larnook  
**Address:** 519 Orrong Road, Armadale

**HO Reference:** HO85  
**Citation status:** Final  
**Date Updated:** 22 March 2022  
**Year of Construction:** 1881

**Designer:** Unknown  
**Builder:** Unknown



Photograph (source: Nigel Lewis and Associates 1983; Stonnington History Centre).



Location map and extent of HO85.

**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

<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 519 Orrong Road, Armadale (otherwise known as Larnook) is significant. Specifically, the form, scale, setback and detailing of the substantial 1881 boom era Italianate mansion is of local heritage significance, as well as the original gate entry point. Later alterations and additions to the residence, tennis court, outbuildings and car park are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

Larnook is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

Larnook is of historical significance as a representative example of the boom era mansions constructed in the suburb of Armadale during the late 19th century, prior to the wider subdivisions of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development of the south eastern suburbs by the Melbourne's wealthiest citizens during the gold rush period. (Criterion A)

Larnook has principal design characteristics attributed with late Victorian mansions. These include the use of slate, a hipped roof form, stucco render, arched projecting bay windows, and wrought iron lacework and brick verandah. (Criterion D)

Larnook has aesthetic significance as a high-quality, fine and intact example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion, comprising a wraparound wrought iron and brick verandah, projecting bays, decorative dental bracketing, arched windows, and slate roof with chimneys. Although it is not highly visible, the building is a landmark residence in Armadale owing to the scale and deep setback which contrasts with the style of later development in the area. (Criterion E)

## HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	<i>Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history</i>	Larnook is of historical significance as a representative example of the boom era mansions constructed in the suburb of Armadale during the late 19th century, prior to the wider subdivisions of the late Victorian estates. The mansion is also of historical significance in demonstrating residential development of the south eastern suburbs by the 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.
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>	Larnook has principal design characteristics attributed with late Victorian mansions. These include the use of slate, a hipped roof form, stucco render, arched projecting bay windows, and wrought iron lacework and brick verandah.
E	<i>Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics</i>	Larnook has aesthetic significance as a high-quality, fine and intact example of a grand Italianate boom era mansion, comprising a wraparound wrought iron and brick verandah, projecting bays, decorative dental bracketing, arched windows, and slate roof with chimneys. Although it is not highly visible, the building is a landmark residence in Armadale owing to the scale and deep setback which contrasts with the style of later development in the area.
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

Larnook is not readily visible from the public domain as it is located within the King David School complex. Other desktop based resources have been used to understand the physical setting of the place.

Larnook is a two-storey Victorian Italianate mansion. The elegant Italianate mansion Larnook is atypical in form to many of Melbourne's larger detached residences, having a protruding polygonal bay and cast iron verandah, both of two-storeys. Its verandah columns are paired and embellished with iron lacework in the balustrade, valence and brackets that together contribute to the elaborate façade. Eaves are supported on closely spaced decorative consoles around the residence and the building's corners are

quoined. Windows at the upper level feature arched heads, those below exhibit a slight curve only. The northern end of the verandah has been infilled on both levels. The designer and architect are unknown.

Larnook is substantially intact, although the original cement render finish has been painted. An inspection in 1984 by David Bick suggested that Larnook was intact externally but that the interior had been significantly altered when converted into an education centre (Bick 1984). A clear view of Larnook is visible from Karbarook Avenue and the original gateway is intact in nearby Stawell Street.

Due to the limitations of this assessment, a built condition assessment has not been undertaken. However, based on a desktop assessment, the ancillary school buildings that have been constructed adjacent to and are connected to the original mansion house, can be considered as being of fair condition.

- [Alterations and Additions](#)

The grounds, setting and interiors of Larnook have been altered since construction of the property in 1881. The gradual subdivision of the original estate, starting in 1912, has substantially reduced the original grounds. The conversion of the mansion from a private residence to an education centre between 1949 to 1952 further altered the grounds and setting of the mansion, as well as the interiors. Mention should also be made that the chimney caps are not in keeping with a house of this period or its design, and are likely to have been altered.

## [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

Larnook was built in 1881 for William H. Miller, son of Henry 'Money' Miller. It was rated in that year as a brick house of twenty rooms 'in progress', standing on three acres of land (Pahran Rate Book 1881). Miller resided at Larnook until 1906. In 1908, *Table Talk* published that Larnook had been rented by one Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Heron for a term (Table Talk 1908). This is further corroborated by the Sands and McDougall Street Directory for 1910, which records Larnook as still being occupied by the Herons.

In 1912, the Prahran Telegraph published that Messrs C. J. and T. Ham would offer fifty-one sites in the first subdivision of the Larnook Estate, thus signalling the initial subdivision of the properties original grounds (The Prahran Telegraph 1912 2). In 1915 however, Larnook was recorded as vacant, till 1917 when the owner, one Norbert Albert Rubens was recorded as living in the mansion.

Rubens is recorded in several newspapers as being at the centre of a mysterious shooting incident in 1917, when he was shot three times on Dandenong Road. The court case that followed implicated his wife, Rose Caroline Rubens, who had shot him for alleged adultery (Truth 1917, 3).

In 1949, Larnook was purchased by the Victorian Government for £18,500 to be converted into a centre for education (Construction 1949 6). In 1952, following considerable internal alterations, the mansion was opened in 1952 as the Domestic Arts Teachers' College (The Herald 1952, 12). In 1984, Larnook was purchased by King David School, who continue to own and operate from the site (The Australian Jewish News 1984 8).

Following the 1984 auction, the Larnook, the adjacent red brick buildings at 517-519 Orrong Road and three brick buildings at 1, 3 and 5 Karbarook Avenue standing on over an acre of land became the property of the King David School Ltd. of 117 Kooyong Road (National Trust 1984).

Larnook 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 1901 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:

- Larnook (519 Orrong Road, Armadale), built in 1881 for W. H. Miller, banker, son of Henry Money' Miller. Recorded by National Trust.
- 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.
- 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 a'Beckett, M.L.C.
- Lalbert constructed in 1880 for Cornelius Job Ham auctioneer and Melbourne City councillor.

## Comparative Analysis

In Armadale, there are remnant examples of large Victorian mansions reflecting the affluent history of the suburb. Though these residences no longer grace manicured gardens set on acreage, they still represent a period of booming development and affluence in Armadale. Larnook is directly comparable with four mansions, three of which are on Orrong Road and a fourth on nearby Elgin Street.

Comparable examples include:

- **Former Sebrof House (514 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO84).** Built in 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 Larnook as both houses are key examples of boom era Italianate mansions built on large estates in the late 19th century on Orrong Road, Armadale. Former Sebrof House directly reflects a period of rich development and expansion, informing Larnook's construction and providing a remnant landscape context for Larnook. Today, both houses provide historical evidence of Armadale prior to the subdivision of the 19th century estates.
- **Trelowarren, formerly known as Kilbryde (543 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO86).** Built in 1876-77 for Robert D. Reid, merchant and member of the Victorian Legislative Council who would later become a Senator, Trelowarren is directly comparable to Larnook as a boom era Italianate mansion formerly on a large estate dating from the late 19th century. Trelowarren directly reflects a period of rich development and expansion, informing Larnook's construction and providing a remnant landscape context for Larnook. Today, both houses provide historical evidence of Armadale prior to the subdivision of the 19th century estates.
- **Redcourt (506 Orrong Road, Armadale) (HO166).** Redcourt was built in 1888 for Edward Yencken, merchant, and shares a boundary with Larnook. Though architecturally different, Redcourt is still directly comparable to Larnook as a boom era mansion built on Orrong Road in the 19th 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 Larnook as a boom era Italianate mansion located between High Street and Dandenong Road. Elgin and Larnook are architecturally similar, sharing a similar form and verandah design, and historically similar as remnant boom era mansions reflecting the history late Victorian estates in Armadale prior to the subdivisions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 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

The building is not readily visible from the street. As a result, historical images of the place have been included below to provide context.



Entrance, image dated 1963 (source: State Library Victoria, Collins, J.T., 1963. [*"Larnook", formerly 13 Orrong Road, Armadale, now 519 Orrong Road*] [picture]).



Front façade looking south east, image dated 1963 (source: State Library Victoria, Collins, J.T., 1963. [*"Larnook", formerly 13 Orrong Road, Armadale, now 519 Orrong Road*] [picture]).



Front façade and western bay, looking south east in 1963 (source: State Library Victoria, Collins, J.T., 1963. ["Larnook", formerly 13 Orrong Road, Armadale, now 519 Orrong Road] [picture]).



Larnook, taken between 1900-1950 (source: State Library Victoria, Anon, 1900. *Larnook* [picture]).



Front façade looking north east, image dated 1963 (source: State Library Victoria, Collins, J.T., 1963. ["Larnook", formerly 13 Orrong Road, Armadale, now 519 Orrong Road] [picture]).



Front façade looking east, image dated 1963 (source: State Library Victoria, Collins, J.T., 1963. ["Larnook", formerly 13 Orrong Road, Armadale, now 519 Orrong Road] [picture]).

## Authors

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