

Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Residence
Address: 16 Mercer Road, Armadale

HO Reference: HO330
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 22 March 2022
Year of Construction: 1899

Designer: Arthur Fisher (possibly)
Builder: Unknown



Photograph of 16 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO330.

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.

Controls:	<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 16 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?

16 Mercer Road is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington, and is associated with one of Australia's most famous mining magnates, Bowes Kelly.

Why is it significant?

Aesthetically, 16 Mercer Road is distinguished by its 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 finely detailed Gothic Revival awning, as well as the front bay window with a separate hipped roof. 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)

The dwelling is associated with one of Australia's most famous mining magnates, Anthony Edward Bowes Kelly (also just referred to as Bowes Kelly), who originally owned the property along with the two neighbouring dwellings at 12 and 14 Mercer Road. (Criterion H)

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, 16 Mercer Road is distinguished by its 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 finely detailed Gothic Revival awning, as well as the front bay window with a separate hipped roof. 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>	The dwelling is associated with one of Australia's most famous mining magnates, Anthony Edward Bowes Kelly (also just referred to as Bowes Kelly), who originally owned the property along with the two neighbouring dwellings at 12 and 14 Mercer Road.

Description

• Physical Analysis

16 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 with ridged valance and finial (replaced) and a secondary projecting hip roof over a window bay. 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.

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 16 Mercer Road are heavily landscaped. There is an extensive back yard with lawn and a pool. There is paved and timber decking area located by the pool and main house. The front yard is predominantly laid in loose brown pebble with inground planter beds with boxwood heading and young magnolia trees along the front fence, side fence and by the front of the house. The planter beds are shaped in a stylized four-leaf year clover shape with a circular centre used for car parking. The front boundary is also defined by mature boxwood (*buxaceae*) hedging. The street boundary is demarcated by a timber post and picket fence.

There are several extensions on the property including a freestanding granny flat in the backyard. There is a single-storey extension on the north (side) elevation towards the front, which uses a similar sized and coloured red brick. There is an additional extension at the rear of the property with a covered porch overlooking the backyard and swimming pool.

16 Mercer Road is located close to the main commercial precinct on High Street, Armadale Train Station and the Mercer Road Tram stop. 16 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 some original detailing. However, the primary built/roof form, original front facing openings and much of the joinery remain intact. 16 Mercer Road would be considered to have moderate integrity.

- **Alterations and Additions**

- Alteration of a carport on the north elevation.
- Removal of pergola to the north elevation.
- Addition of a freestanding granny flat by the back of the house.
- Metal roof ridge cap.
- New timber post and picket boundary fence – it matches 12 and 14 Mercer Road.
- Addition of a new bargeboard.
- Addition of a swimming pool (after 2012).
- Rear extension and covered porch (after 2012).
- Addition of timber pool decking (after 2012).
- Removal of the front lawn, plantings and tiled walkway (after 2012).
- Addition of a pebble laid front yard and driveway (after 2012).

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, 16 Mercer Road comprises one of three identical brick houses (12, 14 and 16) located 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 Moorakyne, also in Malvern in 1901.

Kelly was a keen property investor and developer throughout the 1890s, and 1899 saw the construction of three houses with ten rooms each on his allotment at Mercer Road. 16 Mercer Road was leased to Matthew Baird in the period following construction (Malvern Rate Books 1898-99), and a MMBW Plan from 1902 shows one bathroom as well as steps leading into the dwelling's front entrance (MMBW 1902). Baird's occupancy at 16 Mercer Road lasted a few years, and the house was subsequently leased to Arthur Blackwood by 1905. Mrs. W Seal by 1910 and Commander C. R. W. Lewis by 1915 (Sands & McDougall 1905, 1910, 1915).

Kelly's ownership of 16 Mercer Road concluded after a period of almost two decades, with the property being sold to Laurence Henderson 'Laurie' Olgilvie in c.1920 (Sands & McDougall 1920). A former Australian Rules footballer, Laurie Olgilvie played for the Melbourne Football Club in the Victorian Football League throughout the 1900s (Holmesby 2014). Following his passing in 1927 at the age of forty-nine, ownership of the dwelling was passed onto his wife Alice Hannah Olgilvie, who remained there until her death in 1949 (née Birkenhead) (Sands & McDougall 1935). By 1955, Alice and Laurie's son Laurence Olgilvie is listed as the official occupier (Sands & McDougall 1955). Although little is known about the Olgilvies, their lengthy three and a half decade occupancy at 16 Mercer Road is certainly notable. By 1960, the house was purchased by Thomas Pringle, who remained there until at least 1974. Ownership of the dwelling thus only changed hands twice throughout the 20th century.

Due to a lack of historical material, little can be ascertained about the dwelling from 1974 onwards. A series of modern alterations and additions were made in the 21st century, and the house was last put up for auction in 2010.

[Comparative Analysis](#)

The following comparative analysis focuses on a range of dwellings located in the City of Stonnington that share stylistic similarities to 16 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:

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

Compared to the above properties, 16 Mercer Road is not the most intact example a Victorian house with Medieval/Free Style influences. 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.

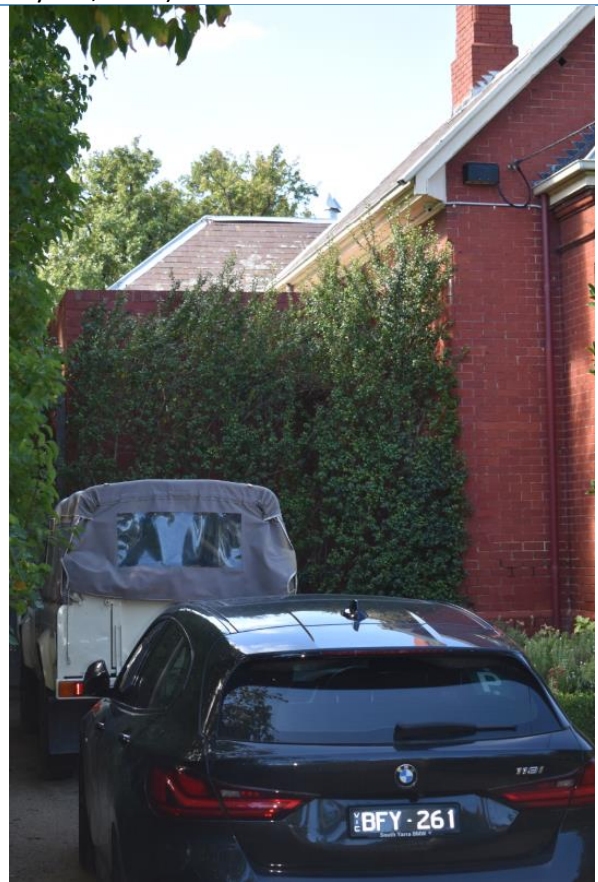
Further Images



Overview of front façade (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



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



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



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

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, 1992.

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