

PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

ADDRESS

53-55 Mary Street

TYPE

- Single Residence
- Shop
- Office
- Landscape feature
- View
- Multiple Unit Res.
- Outbuildings
- Industrial Building
- Public building
- Other

TITLE

"Alvemo"

EXISTING DESIGNATION

HBR [ ] GBR [ ] AHC [ ] NT [ ] VAS [ ]

STREETSCAPE LEVEL

1 [ ] 2 [] 3 [ ]  
SIGNIFICANT [ ] SIGNIFICANT []

STREET TREES KERB & GUTTERS  
(provisional-concealed by garden)

GRADING

A [] B [ ] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ]  
KEYNOTE BUILDING [ ]

RECOMMENDED FOR

HBR/GBR [] AHC [] URBAN CONSERVATION AREA []  
VAS [ ] PLANNING SCHEME PROTECTION []  
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE [ ] OTHER [ ]

SURVEY DATE Oct. 91.  
NEG FILE 14.30, 31

Title  
Vol.  
Fol.

THEME

- Early Settlement
- Mansions
- Victorian Garden Suburb
- Municipal dev.
- 1870s growth
- Garden villas
- Working enclaves
- Commercial Centres
- Edwardian Prosperity
- Interwar Housing
- Flats and Offices

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Date 1888-1890  
Architect possibly Beswick and Coote  
Builder  
Elements



- Contributing garden
- Landmark tree
- Original or early hard landscape layout
- Original or early fence

NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

See attached

INTEGRITY Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]  
Poor [ ]  
UNCLEAR

CONDITION Good [ ]  
Fair [ ]  
Poor [ ]  
UNCLEAR

CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated significant garden []

## 53-55 MARY STREET

### "ALVERNO"

#### History

This splendid brick mansion with its tower was built between 1888 and 1890 for William Henry Archer, Registrar-General,<sup>48</sup> who had lived in Burwood Road since the 1850s.<sup>49</sup> Archer's home may have been designed by the prolific architect, John Beswicke,<sup>50</sup> who designed many private and commercial buildings in Hawthorn. The property was listed in the 1888-89 Hawthorn rate book as house and land in Mary Street owned and occupied by W.H. Archer (NAV 96 pounds).<sup>51</sup> An assessment made in the period ending 31 January 1890 described the property as an eleven-roomed brick house "unfinished" (NAV 150 pounds), owned and occupied by W.H. Archer, barrister.<sup>52</sup> In 1890-91 the house was described as a brick house of ten rooms with an NAV which was increased from 100 to 170 pounds.<sup>53</sup> The name "Alverno" appeared first in the 1898-99 rate book when the address was given as 41 Mary Street.<sup>54</sup> By 1901, when Archer still owned "Alverno" but was living at 41 Weinberg Road, his former residence was occupied by Henry Wilson, engineer.<sup>55</sup> Dr. John O'Brien was there in 1906.<sup>56</sup> After Archer's death in 1909, "Alverno" was owned by the Archer Estate and then Mrs. Mary Archer of Ashley Park, South Yan Yean.<sup>57</sup>

W.H. Archer was born in London in 1825 and in 1841 trained under the actuary, Francis Gustavius Pavius Nelson. In 1848 he was converted to Roman Catholicism. He arrived in Melbourne in November 1852 and in 1859 was appointed Registrar-General. During the 1850s Archer edited the first issue of the *Statistical Register* which appeared in 1854. In 1862 when the *Land Transfer Act* introduced the Torrens' title system of land registration into Victoria, its administration was given to Archer. However, in 1863 he

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48. Hawthorn RB. 1888-89 No. 578 (or 611); Ibid 1889-90 No. 578. (See 1888 Rate Book Index. Local History Collection, Hawthorn City Library).
49. Information supplied by Gwen McWilliam; Gwen McWilliam, *Grace Park Hawthorn*, Hawthorn Historical Society Area Walk IV, 1987-88.
50. *Argus* 21 April 1888, letting of tenders for erection of a two-storey family residence, Grace Park, Hawthorn. (This might also refer to 23 Mary Street built in 1888-89 for Theo Kitchen, soap manufacturer).
51. See footnote 1.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid. 1890-91 Western Division No. 716.
54. Ibid. 1898-99 No. 2511.
55. Ibid. 1901-1902 No. 2523.
56. Ibid. 1906-7 No. 2597.
57. Ibid. 1909-10 No. 2666.



### 53-55 Mary Street continued

withdrew from this position to study law at Melbourne University and in 1867 was called to the Bar. In 1868, Archer was invited to become Registrar of Titles and in May 1874 was appointed Secretary of Lands and Survey. In January 1878, on "Black Wednesday", he was among the prominent civil servants dismissed by the Berry Liberal Ministry. Later that year, Archer opened a legal practice in Temple Court. Archer's daughter, Grace, married a son of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. Archer is buried in the Boorondara Cemetery in Kew.<sup>58</sup>

In 1910, Archer's former residence, "Alverno", became the property of the artist, Mrs. Alice McGinnis, who renamed it "Yarrock House". Mrs. McGinnis, who was a member of a pioneering Mallee family, owned the property until her death in 1947.<sup>59</sup> In May 1949, 53 Mary Street became the property of Mrs. Walters.<sup>60</sup> A new fence was added in the 1960s.<sup>61</sup>

The Grace Park estate was formed from several lots purchased by Michael or Julia Lynch between 1846 and 1847, forming grounds to "Grace Park House", constructed by the Lynch's before 1858.

After Lynch's death in October 1871, Julia Lynch became the owner/occupier of the house and 3 acres. In 1884 the Grace Park Estate was leased to the Grace Park Leasehold Syndicate headed by Henry Byron Moore and was subdivided soon after into the broad Serpentine Street form of the Grace Park area. Moore became insolvent in 1891 and there followed a series of convoluted lease arrangements until in 1904 the Settled Lands Act made sales possible. These commenced in 1904. Architect Christopher Cowper bought and developed 33 allotments between 1908 and 1912. An architectural competition for new buildings for this elegantly designed suburb, set a standard of high quality homes in up to date designs, on large allotments. The designs in the competition, some of which were built, and those which came later, emphasised the open garden nature of the Estate by constructing houses which addressed at least two sides. Extensive lanes to the rear kept horse/carriage and later car access away from the frontages, and allowed the high amenity of the footpath promenade under tree avenues to dominate. The centrepiece of the Estate was the creation of a Park - "Grace Park" on the lower lying land. Associated facilities for lawn tennis and cricket added status to an already desirable location, well served by train routes.

The curving railway easement to Kew was formed in 1887 but was in use extensively for only a few years. It finally closed in the 1950s. This fortuitously reinforced the garden suburb planning by providing a park spine through the centre of the estate.

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<sup>58</sup>. *Australian Directory of Biography*, Vol. 3, pp. 141-143.

<sup>59</sup>. Hawthorn RB. 1910-11 No. 2654 Mrs. McGinnis painted sprays of blossoms on the doors and decorated the walls of the house with her paintings of bush scenes.

<sup>60</sup>. *Ibid.* 1949-50 No. 2258.

<sup>61</sup>. Information supplied by Gwen McWilliam.

### 53-55 Mary Street continued

Despite the economic conditions of the 1890s several properties were developed. In the twentieth century the character set by the earlier development was reinforced with Queen Anne and Garden Bungalow designs often by architect/developer Christopher Cowper. By the end of the First World War most land was fully developed and the distinctive character of the Precinct was set.

#### Description

Substantially concealed by garden and fence. On-site inspection required. What is apparent is noted below:

A very large, two-storeyed mansion executed in polychrome brick with rendered dressings (still unpainted). A two-storey colonnade extends between a three stage tower on the garden elevation, and a projecting wing on the street elevation.

#### Assessment

Not possible without on-site inspection. Sufficient can be viewed to make it clear that this building is amongst the largest, and the most intact in Hawthorn. If it can be attributed to Beswicke and Coote it should be compared with 405 Tooronga Road, a rendered colonnaded mansion but different in its character. For its polychrome brickwork, it should be compared with 16 Harcourt Street (possibly by Beswicke of slightly later date), and with 131 Power Street. Notwithstanding the architectural significance of State level which is likely to arise from this, the building is of State significance for its association with Archer.

#### Significance

State

1. Historically significant at the State level for its associations with a notable Victorian, William Henry Archer, barrister and Registrar-General, and administrator of the Torrens' Title to Victoria.





## PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM - PRIVATE GARDENS

ADDRESS 53-55 Mary Street  
Hawthorn

## TYPE

Cottage Garden  Suburban Garden  
 Terrace House Garden  View  
 Villa Garden  Landmark  
 City Mansion Garden  Other

TITLE "Alverno"

EXISTING DESIGNATION HBR  AHC  NT  SIGN. T.  VGS

STREETSCAPE LEVEL 1  2  3

GRADING A  B  C  D  E

RECOMMENDED FOR HBR  AHC  SIGNIFICANT TREE REG.  PSP   
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE  URBAN CONSERVATION AREA

SURVEY DATE 15.12.91

NEG FILE EA

Title  
Vol.  
Fol.

## THEME

Early Settlement  
 Mansions  
 Victorian Garden  
 Suburb  
 Municipal dev.  
 1870s growth  
 Garden villas  
 Working enclaves  
 Commercial Centres  
 Edwardian Prosperity  
 Interwar Housing  
 Flats and Offices

## DETAILS

Date 1888-1890

Designer

Layout/Structures

Property does not appear on 1903 MMBW plan but house appears to be Victorian. However garden is extremely overgrown, therefore it is not possible to say whether the original layout is intact. Service lane on western side of property, driveway entrance on eastern side, possibly curving round to front door.

## NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

INTEGRITY	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	CONDITION	Good <input type="checkbox"/>
	Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Fair <input type="checkbox"/>
	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>		Poor <input type="checkbox"/>
			Unclear

## ALTERATIONS

## CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated Structures

As the gardens were only surveyed from the front footpath, all assessments are incomplete and hence provisional. The scope of the study did not permit garden access which would be a pre-requisite for a more complete assessment.

