

Trelowarren, 543 Orrong Road, Armadale



History & Description

In May 1876, the prominent Melbourne architect, George Raymond Johnson, called tenders for the erection of a villa residence for R. D. Reid, Esq.²⁷³ Johnson was noted for his designs for town halls, hotels, theatres, commercial buildings and houses in Melbourne and its suburbs from the 1860s to the 1880s.²⁷⁴

The following year, 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).²⁷⁵ He also owned four acres of land with a four-roomed wooden house off High Street.²⁷⁶ By 1878, Reid was rated for the house on the site of 543 Orrong Road described as an eleven-roomed brick house on 8 acres.²⁷⁷ Later, in the 1880s, Reid's residence was described as a 12-roomed house.²⁷⁸

The house is a large Italianate villa with a projecting bay to one side of the facade and a slate roof with a balcony and verandah returning to the southern facade. Fine frieze work decorates the upper storey and lower bay windows and the cast iron verandah appears to be intact.

273. *Argus*, 10.5.1876.

274. Miles Lewis. *Australian Architectural Index*.

275. City of Prahran Rate Book 1877 vol.2, No.3775.

276. City of Prahran Rate Book 1876 vol.2, No.3524.

277. City of Prahran Rate Book 1878 vol.2 No.3723, NAV 200 pounds.

278. City of Prahran Rate Book 1885-86 vol.2 No.6006, NAV 180 pounds.

At the turn of the century, although Caroline Reid continued to live there, the property was owned by John J. Falconer, manager.²⁷⁹ An 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.²⁸⁰ A single storey rendered addition to the south of the building consists of a rendered facade with pediment form in the parapet wall.

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 and recent native plantings are clustered immediately in front of the building. A specimen of *Phytolacca dioica*, situated to the north of the house, is of state significance for its age and size, contributing to the streetscape, and forming a local landmark. In addition, another Victorian tree, a specimen of *Agathis robusta* survives.²⁸¹

By the 1950s the property listed as 39 Orrong Road was owned by the Victorian Government.²⁸²

Significance

This 1870s residence has state significance as an example of a surviving early Victorian mansion house designed by the important Victorian architect, George Johnson. It has state significance also, for the survival of a Victorian planting, a specimen of *Phytolacca dioica*.

Sources

Argus, 10.5.1876, p.3

City of Prahran Rate Books, Windsor Ward.

City of Prahran, *Significant Tree and Garden Study*.

Lewis, M., *Australian Architectural Index*, 1990.

MMBW Detail Plan and House Cover No.1000.

Analysis & Recommendations

It is recommended that this property be retained at A1 level.

279. City of Prahran Rate Book 1900-1901 Windsor Ward No.8165.

280. MMBW Detail Plan No.1000.

281. City of Prahran, *Significant Tree and Garden Study*.

282. MMBW House Cover No.1000.