

'Torrington'

17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale

Place type: Residential Building (private), Villa

Significance level: Local



Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian Period (1851-1901) Italianate

Locality history

The locality of Armadale emerged in the 1870s at the eastern end of Toorak. The suburb straddled both the older municipality of Prahran and the newer one of Malvern, with Boundary Road (now Kooyong Road) marking the boundary between the two. The name Armadale derived from the name of the grand residence of Victorian politician James Munro, 'Armadale House', built in 1876. Other mansions and fine villas followed, including 'Brocklesby' (1879) and 'Flete' (1882-83). Along Orrong Road, between High Street and Dandenong Road, an impressive row of five mansions was built for some of Melbourne's leading businessmen in the 1880s. These were 'Larnook', 'Redcourt', 'Sebrof', 'Lalbert' and 'Kabratook' (demolished) (Foster 1996).

Through the 1880s, Armadale was promoted as an exclusive residential area for the middle class, with subdivisions offering generous suburban allotments. A railway station had opened at Armadale in 1879 to service the new Oakleigh railway line and this was used as a drawcard to attract buyers to the area. Much of Armadale's housing stock reflects its foundational period of the 1880s and early 1890s. As well as the large ornate homes of the wealthy, there were streets of comfortable middle-class suburban homes, including double-storey terrace rows, along with pockets of smaller, more modest homes, including some working-class cottages.

Commercial development along High Street, including shops and other services, served the surrounding residential area. The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Board established a tram route along High Street to the city in the early 1900s. In the 1930s and 1940s, as more and more of the large homes in the area were broken up and the land subdivided, antique furniture was in oversupply. In the 1940s the shops in High Street began to carry antiques and *objets d'art*, catering for an upper-middle-class clientele, and laying the foundation for what later became a high-end shopping strip.

From the early twentieth century, many of Melbourne's large mansion homes set in large garden settings became unsustainable. Large estates were subdivided for residential development, and sometimes the house survived on a much reduced allotment. Large private homes were also converted into multiple dwellings or 'flats', or operated as boarding houses. Large houses were also converted for use as private hospitals (for example 'Alencon') and schools (for example, 'Brocklesby' and 'Blairholme').

Place history

The house at 17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale, was erected c1886 when the house is first rated (RB). John Yeoman, photographer, was rated in 1886 at £35 for a brick house, and in 1892 he was rated at £135 pounds for a 10-roomed brick house (RB). This indicates that the house was enlarged between 1886 and 1892. The house was situated on the west side of Huntingtower Road immediately adjoining the mansion 'Weerona'. John Yeoman is also referred to as 'John Yeoman junior'.

John Yeoman had worked in Prahran as a photographer since at least 1884, and had expanded his business during that decade with several studios in operation. His main studio, operating as John Yeoman & Co., was located at 47 Chapel Street, Prahran, and this operated from 1884 to 1891. He had another studio at 213 Chapel Street, Windsor, which operated from 1888-1889. By the early twentieth century 'Yeoman & Co' had photography studios all over Melbourne, including on Bourke Street, in Brunswick, South Melbourne, and Malvern (Frost 1991).

Yeoman's residence in Huntingtower Road was referred to as 'Torrington' by at least 1888 when his wife Mary (née Brown) was reported as having died at 'Torrington', Huntingtower Road, Armadale (*Telegraph* 27 October 1888). Two children had been born to John and Mary Yeoman at Malvern in 1886 and 1887.

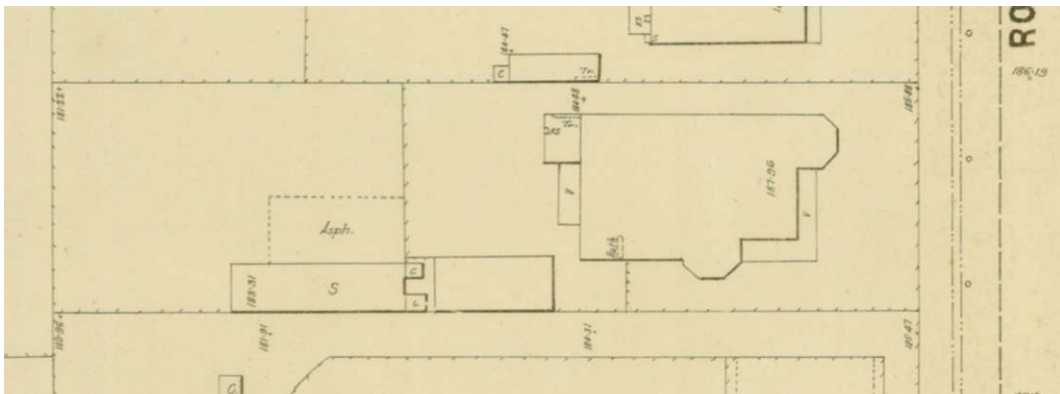


Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan no. 1763, dated 1902, shows the house on a deep block on Huntingtower Road (source: SLV).

The MMBW Detail Plan no. 1763, dated 1902, shows a substantial residence on a deep block. The house has bay windows facing south and east, and a return front verandah. Outbuildings included stables and what was possibly a carriage house.

By 1899 John Yeoman had moved from 'Torrington' in Huntingtower Road. The house was listed in 1899 as owned and occupied by Mrs Mary Carter, who is rated £90 for a brick house of 10 rooms (RB). The following year the house was owned and occupied by Joseph Reed, surveyor (RB). Joseph Martin Reed (1857-1932) was Surveyor-General of Victoria from 1899 until 1914, and was the first Australian-born person to be appointed to that position (*Joseph Martin Reed* 2016). Reed received the Imperial Service Award for his service in this role in 1903 (*It's an Honour* 2016). Joseph Reed and family remained at 17-19 Huntingtower Road from 1900 until c1906 (ER). In 1932, the owner of 'Torrington' in Huntingtower Road was M. Derham (SHC).

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Physical description

'Torrington' is a substantial single-storey Italianate villa that occupies a deep allotment on the west side of Huntingtower Road, north of High Street. The house is set back from the street behind a sympathetic reproduction metal palisade fence and a modern turning circle.

Constructed c1886 'Torrington' is asymmetrically planned with a return verandah set between two perpendicular projecting canted bay windows. The asymmetrical form became popular during the 1880s, and in this respect the house is a relatively typical, although large, suburban Italianate villa. It has a hipped slate roof with an ogee profile return verandah clad in corrugated iron. The cast iron verandah is highly intact with fluted columns and fine integrated cast iron patterns within a chevron motif. The house is rendered and retains its ruled finish. It is distinguished by its highly ornate cement render detailing, including the closely spaced eaves brackets set between rosettes; the moulded cornices with consoles and shell motifs to the three visible chimneys; and the large incised floral patterns on the rendered walls beneath the verandah.

The bay window fronting Huntingtower Road is elaborate with segmentally arched double-hung sash windows with inset barley-twist Corinthian colonnettes framing the windows, and

vermicated keystones. The moulded impostes are continuous with rosette details. The sills rest on floral brackets. Inset spiral colonnettes also mark the corners of the canted bay. Other windows are segmentally arched double-hung sashes. The entrance door retains its elaborate timber surround with sidelights and highlights that may retain original decorative glazing.



Figure 2. Detail of fine incised floral patterns to the render and cast iron ogee verandah. The palisade fence in the foreground is a sympathetic reproduction (source: Context 2016)



Figure 3. Detail of front projecting canted bay with fine cast and run detailing to bay windows (source: Context 2016)



Figure 4. Detail showing render details to chimney and cornice with eaves brackets (source: Context 2016)

Recent Marshall White real estate photos (2010) show a large two-storey extension to the rear of the house which is not readily visible from Huntingtower Road. The extension presents a

two-storey verandah with central gabled section to the rear of the property which is largely occupied by a tennis court. The property brochure also shows intact period details to the interior including plaster mouldings and stone fireplace surrounds to the front rooms.

Comparative analysis

As discussed in the Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, section 8.2.2, the suburban house on a garden allotment was an aspiration of many middle-class Victorians:

Davison (1978:145) describes the Victorian cult of the home in the fresh air and tranquillity of the suburbs as a haven from the noise and dirt of the city - the ideal of rus in urbe (country in the city) which, through Victoria's prosperity and the growth of the public transport system, became possible for many working people. For most suburbanites this home was a single-storey detached house surrounded by its own garden. On a visit to Australia in the 1880s, Twopeny (1883:37) noted that this was the almost universal preference of Australians. During the boom of the 1880s many people found their ideal piece of rus in urbe in the Malvern municipality. Here streets of Victorian villas rapidly began to replace market gardens, especially in the vicinity of the railway lines.

The detached house was the typical Victorian house form in the middle-ring suburbs, in areas where the new tram and train lines facilitated travel and allowed lower density development. In this spacious suburban environment, they could be set in large gardens with side setbacks allowing for a return verandah on one or two sides. They were also built in inner suburban areas for better-off residents, but were usually restricted in form with a front verandah only and side walls near the boundaries.

The architectural expression of these small to medium sized houses ranges from quite simple to those lushly embellished on par with much grander houses. In keeping with the dominant style of the Victorian era, most of the small to medium detached houses in Stonnington are Italianate in style. The simplest ones have a symmetrical façade with the front door in the centre. Many have added visual interest created by a projecting bay to one side of the façade, and a cast-iron verandah to the other, creating the classic asymmetrical Italianate suburban form.

The Italianate style had its origins in the landscape paintings of Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain over a century earlier. These two French artists were enamoured with the landscapes and architecture of rural Italy, depicting it as a vision of Arcadia. Their efforts inspired a broader pursuit of 'the Picturesque' in architecture.

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, the Italianate spread widely in Britain fuelled by the works of architects such as John Nash and Charles Barry and through designs promoted in pattern books such as Charles Parker's *Villa Rustica* (1832). In 1845, the style received Royal endorsement when Prince Albert, working with architect Thomas Cubitt, designed 'Osbourne' on the Isle of Wight as a retreat for Queen Victoria and the Royal family. Osbourne with its plain stuccoed expression and tall balustraded tower would become the model for many large residences throughout the Empire including Government House in Melbourne.

The style, which emerged as the preferred expression for Melbourne's grandest mansions of the mid-century, was quickly adapted to suit more modest suburban villas and terraces. As Hubbard notes (in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, 2012:357):

Flexibility and adaptability were the secrets to the success of the Italianate style. It could range from the simplest of buildings to the grandest. It was not a precise style and could accommodate different levels of architectural sophistication. It could be formally symmetrical or informally asymmetrical. While towers were standard, they might be reduced to just a porch. The style was easy to copy and could be used by speculative builders buying stock items for decoration. Most importantly, the Italianate style used the vocabulary of classical architecture freely but sparingly, generally with relatively plain expanses of wall and hipped roofs with bracketed eaves.

The Italianate house is so common in the Melbourne area that this is the standard image people hold of the 'Victorian house'. Condensed to its key features, they would be a hipped roof with an M-profile (i.e., having a central valley to the rear half, which allows a low

ridgeline), bracketed eaves, chimneys with a cornice at the top (a run cement-render moulding), and a timber or iron-framed verandah with cast-iron ornament to all but the grandest houses. Common extras included a faceted (canted) bay used to create an asymmetric composition (or occasionally used symmetrically), and windows that had a round or segmental arched opening, some of which were embellished with run cement-render mouldings or delicate hood moulds.

There were three general types of cladding for Italianate houses. The most modest were clad in timber weatherboards or blocked boards emulating expensive ashlar. The two most common types were finished in cement render or face brick. Rendered houses could obtain a high level of run and cast ornament at an affordable price, leading to some highly embellished examples. All, even the most modest, had ruled render with incised lines to emulate the more expensive stone construction. Face brickwork was also common, usually dark brown Hawthorn bricks with cream brick dressings (bichrome) from the late 1860s, and later in the century with red brick accents as well (polychrome). Some architects and designer-builders created bold patterns with the coloured bricks. As good building stone was not common in Victoria, very few houses were built of stone. Early examples were of bluestone, such as the grand 'Bishopscourt' in East Melbourne.

The development of the former City of Prahran and the western part of the former City of Malvern coincides with the emergence of the Italianate forms of expression in Victoria. Consequently, the City of Stonnington retains a disproportionate number of Melbourne's better examples of the mode. A number of these, typically the grandest and most elaborate mansions or those associated with Victoria's most notable families, have been added to the Victorian Heritage Register. These include: 'Toorak House', 'Greenwich House' and 'Mandeville Hall', in Toorak; 'Stonnington' in Malvern; and 'Malvern House' in Glen Iris.

Examples of Italianate houses that are of individual significance in Stonnington's Heritage Overlay (both in individual HOs and HO precincts) can be divided into a number of groups according to the number of dwellings (attached or detached), their size, ornament and level of architectural sophistication.

Generally, 'Torrington' at 17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale can be compared to other Significant medium-sized Italianate houses in the municipality, of which there are a relatively high number that adopt the asymmetrical Italianate plan form. Examples include more modest houses set on typically narrow suburban allotments, including: 34 Northcote Road, Armadale (in HO130), 59 Northcote Road, Armadale (in HO130), 103 Kooyong Road, Armadale (in HO130), 14 Donald Street, Prahran (in HO456), 22 Donald Street, Prahran (in HO456), 5 Fawkner Street, South Yarra (in HO131), 71 Tivoli Road, South Yarra (in HO149), 48 Davis Avenue, South Yarra (in HO150), and 50 The Avenue, Windsor (in HO148).

'Torrington' is more appropriately compared to larger Significant examples built on more generous allotments which allowed for a return verandah, often terminating at a second projecting bay to the side elevation (as at 17-19 Huntingtower Road). Examples include: 5 Royal Crescent, Armadale (in HO130), 11 Avondale Road, Armadale (in HO123), 860 Malvern Road, Armadale (in HO130), 46 Northcote Road, Armadale (in HO130), 34 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135), 5 Wynnstay Road, Prahran (in HO135), 'Oтира' at 56 The Avenue, Windsor (in HO148), and 46 The Avenue, Windsor (in HO148).

In comparison to the examples listed above, 'Torrington' is closest in massing and detail to the villas at 11 Avondale Road, Armadale, and 5 Wynnstay Road, Prahran. These examples also adopt typical asymmetrical Italianate planning with a cast iron return verandah set between projecting bays. Unlike 'Torrington', however, the villas both occupy corner allotments so the return verandah and perpendicular projecting bays address both street frontages. The villa at 5 Wynnstay Road is further distinguished by its raised siting, utilising grand front steps to the raised verandah which has elaborate cast iron work with paired columns and a balustrade of alternating panels and balusters. The villas at 11 Avondale Road and 5 Wynnstay Road vary in their level of intactness with the most obvious change to 5 Wynnstay Road being the overpainted brickwork.



Figure 5. 11 Avondale Road, Armadale, individually significant in HO123 (source: Google Streetview).

Both the villa at 11 Avondale Road and ‘Torrington’ utilise an elaborate range of cast and run cement render details with slight differences relating to their particular window, eaves and chimney detailing. The details at 11 Avondale Road, including acanthus leaf impost mouldings and vermiculated quoins, is generally more muscular. In contrast, the refined detailing of ‘Torrington’ includes fine incised floral detailing to the walls beneath the verandah, and engaged barley-twist Corinthian colonnettes to the bay windows. They are both highly intact as viewed and appreciated from the street, retaining their ogee profile verandahs with high quality cast-iron work, which in the case of 11 Avondale Road returns to a rectangular projecting bay to the south (side) instead of a matching canted bay as at ‘Torrington’. Both villas have had additions constructed to their rear.



Figure 6. 5 Wynnstay Road, Prahran, individually significant in HO135 (source: Context 2016).

In conclusion, ‘Torrington’ at 17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale is a highly intact example of one of the municipality’s collection of substantial single storey Italianate villas. It retains its ruled render finish which is distinguished by the highly ornate cement render detailing which includes: the closely spaced eaves brackets set between rosettes; the moulded cornices with consoles and shell motifs to the chimneys; and the large incised floral patterns on the rendered walls beneath the verandah. Other render details to the bay window fronting Huntingtower Road include the inset barley-twist Corinthian colonnettes framing the windows, vermiculated

keystones, moulded impostes with rosette details and the floral brackets to sills. Inset spiral colonnettes also distinguish the corners of the canted bay.

Thematic context

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers

8.2.1 'Country in the city' - Suburban development in Malvern before WWI

10.8 The arts

'Torrington' is of historical interest for its association with professional photographer John Yeoman (1857-1933) of John Yeoman & Co. photographic studios.

Assessment against criteria

Assessment of this place was carried out in relation to the HERCON model criteria as set out in the VPP Practice Note 'Applying the Heritage Overlay' (2015).

Statement of significance

What is significant?

'Torrington' at 17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale, is significant. It was built c1886 and comprises a substantial single-storey Italianate villa constructed to an asymmetrical plan form with a cast-iron return verandah set between two perpendicular projecting bays.

The house was built for John Yeoman (1857-1933), a professional photographer and owner of John Yeoman & Co. photographic studios. Yeoman was a well-known commercial photographer with a number of studios around Melbourne and suburbs. It was also the residence of the Surveyor-General of Victoria, Joseph Martin Reed (1857-1932), who occupied the house from 1900 until c1906.

The house is significant as viewed and appreciated from Huntingtower Road, and is significant to the extent of its nineteenth century external form and fabric.

Modern additions and alterations are not significant.

How is it significant?

'Torrington' at 17-19 Huntingtower Road, Armadale is of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

'Torrington' is architecturally a fine and highly intact representative example of a substantial Victorian Italianate villa residence built for middle-class residents of Armadale, of the sort that began to characterise the suburb in the 1880s and 1890s. 'Torrington' exhibits typical features of this type including the asymmetrical plan form of a projecting canted bay to one side of a return cast-iron verandah, intact ruled render finish, hipped roof clad in slate and rendered chimneys with heavy cornices. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, 'Torrington' is distinguished by its highly ornate cement render detailing which includes: the closely spaced eaves brackets set between rosettes; the moulded cornices with consoles and shell motifs to the three visible chimneys; and the large incised floral patterns on the rendered walls beneath the verandah. Other render details to the bay window fronting Huntingtower Road include the inset spiral colonnettes that mark the corners of the canted bay, the inset barley-twist Corinthian colonnettes framing the windows, vermiculated keystones, moulded impostes with rosette details and the floral brackets to sills. (Criterion E)

Recommendation

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the whole property as defined by the title boundaries.

HO Schedule controls: None

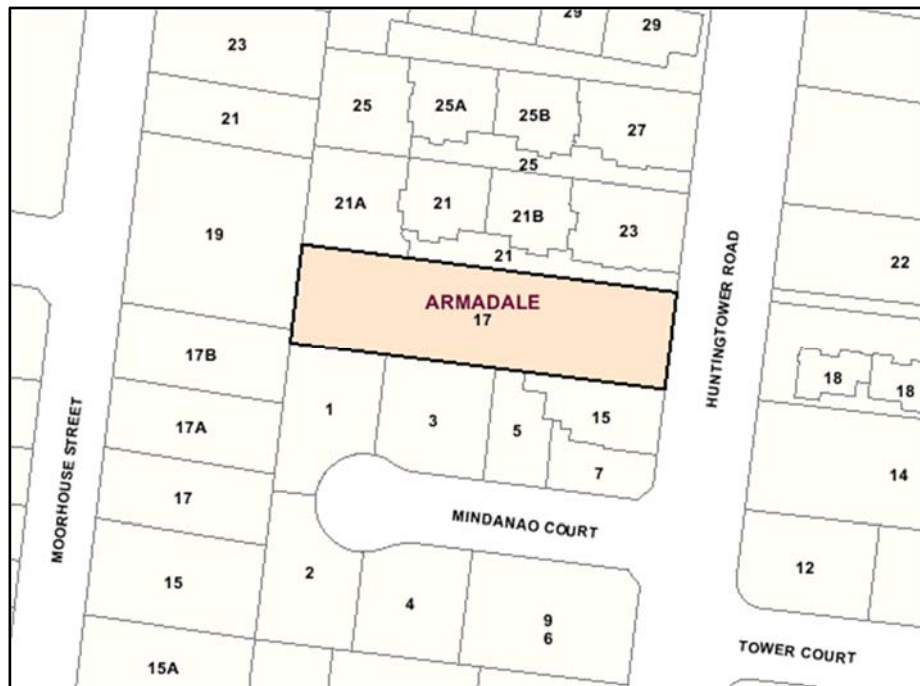


Figure 7. Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 17-19 Huntingtower, Armadale (source: www.land.vic.gov.au).

Recommended grading: A2