

16 Mercer Road - R

1897: Part of allotment measuring 249ft valued at £145 Owner: Bowes Kelly (Malvern Rate Book 1897-98)

1899: 3 brick houses built Nos 12, 14 and 16. No 16 occupied by Matthew Baird, gentleman. Value £100. Owner, Bowes Kelly (Malvern Rate Book 1898-99)

1900: Described as having 10 rooms. (Malvern Rate Book 1899-1900)

1902: 3 houses shown on MMBW plan

1903: Owner: Bowes Kelly, 70 Queen Street, Melbourne Agent: H A Harrison, 13 Seymour Avenue, Malvern - Occupation of Harrison unknown (MMBW Drainage Plan 36709)

(This material was compiled by the National Trust)

One of three once identical houses constructed by famous mining magnate Bowes Kelly, an original director of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited and the principal developer of the Mt Lyall mine in Tasmania, Bowes Kelly lived nearby in Waiora in Glenferrie Road from 1888 before moving to Moorakynne, a mansion next to Stonnington. He also was involved in property development in Melbourne. It has not been established who the architect was for these three buildings. They are possibly the work of Arthur Fisher who lived next to 1 Sorrett Avenue, and who designed the pioneering mediaeval inspired half timbered Westford, at 2 Ash Grove East Malvern. These houses are stylistically very similar to 1 Sorrett Avenue and Nos 3, 5 and 7 Myamyn Street, also with mediaeval influences. Bowes Kelly was also responsible for these and they are close to his residence Waiora. They are also similar to Fisher's developments at 127, 129 and 133 Manning Road East Malvern.

These houses were designed in an eclectic manner with a Mediaeval character to the gable facing the street which has a secondary projecting hip roof over a window bay. The Mediaeval character was reinforced by the entry gablet on the verandah with wooden fretwork. They may have borrowed this detail from Sir George Verdon's hill station, Alton at Mt Macedon which was influenced by Verdon's association with leading English architects. The steep pitched roofs, tall chimneys and the lack of stucco ornamentation on these red face brick work buildings represents a rejection of the Italianate and the more flamboyant Queen Anne styles. The plan form, however, with two projecting bays containing a return verandah is not uncommon for the period. 16 Mercer Road is possibly the most intact of this group having retained verandah decoration and the entry gablet. The barge boards to the main gable, however, have been replaced. This house has a sympathetic picket fence and hedge.

16 Mercer Road is of regional significance as an integral part of a group of three which possess distinctive mediaeval character and restrained detailing that set these buildings apart from the prevailing fashions. It is also significant as one of a group of houses constructed by one of Australia's most famous mining magnates.