

Heritage Citation

'NIRVANA'

Address: 3 Avalon Road, Armadale

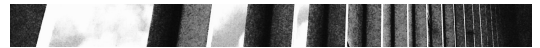
Prepared by: GJM Heritage/Purcell

Date: June 2017 (updated 31 July 2018)

Place type: Residential	Architect: Not known
Grading: Locally significant	Builder: Not known
Integrity: Very High	Construction Date: 1907
Recommendation: Include in the Heritage Overlay	Extent of Overlay: To property title boundary



Figure 1. 3 Avalon Road, Armadale (GJM Heritage/Purcell, June 2016)



Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The two-storey Federation house known as Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale, built in 1907.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The house's original external form, materials and detailing
- The house's high level of integrity to its original design.

Later alterations and additions, particularly substantial built structures constructed at the rear of the property, are not significant.

How is it significant?

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale, is of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale is a fine and representative example of a Federation house. It displays typical features of the Federation Arts and Crafts architectural style popular in the first decade of the twentieth century in Armadale and across Melbourne more broadly, including a simple form and design with restrained decorative treatment and subtle Art Nouveau-inspired detailing (Criterion D).

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale, is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of what can broadly be defined as a Federation Arts and Crafts house. The simple design, with main hipped roof, prominent front bay and two-storey side verandah, together with the restrained use of distinctive architectural elements and lack of adornment, presents a picturesque composition of this architectural style. The possible involvement of prominent Melbourne architect Walter Butler in the design is of note (Criterion E).

Historical Themes

The place illustrates the following themes as outlined in the *Stonnington Environmental History* (2009):

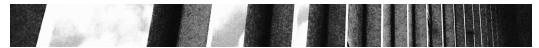
8 Building Suburbs

- 8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

Locality history

The land on which the suburb now sits was first occupied by farmers and market gardeners in the 1840s and 50s, but its pleasant rural outlook and relative proximity to the centre of Melbourne meant that it proved desirable and was subsequently subdivided for residential purposes. The locality was named after 'Armadale' on Kooyong Road (1876), the residence of James Munro. Munro was a speculator and land-boomer, President of the Gardiner Road District Board (1872-73) and later Premier of Victoria (1890-1892). Munro named the house after his town of birth, Armadale in Sutherland Shire, Scotland (Context 2006: 193; Victorian Places). Armadale was previously part of both the former City of Prahran and former City of Malvern, divided by Kooyong Road, before their consolidation in 1994 to form the City of Stonnington.

In 1879, the Oakleigh railway line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway line coincided with the beginning of the land boom, which saw substantial urban growth across what is now the City of Stonnington. The population of the former City of Prahran almost doubled in the 1880s, with development spreading east of Kooyong Road, into the western part of the former City of



Malvern, while the population of the former City of Malvern saw a dramatic increase, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891. The arrival of the railway line triggered commercial expansion near Armadale station and the subdivision and residential development of the surrounding area. The character of the development varied. Small timber and brick workers cottages and residences, and some terraces and duplexes, were typically constructed closer to the railway lines. More substantial family dwellings and mansions were typically constructed further away from the station, predominantly of brick, on large suburban blocks of land (Context 2006:65-6; Victorian Places). However, by 1891, the cycle of land speculation that had driven price growth and residential expansion began to collapse, and the 1890s Depression hit hard. 'As the inflow of foreign funds that had previously underpinned expansion dried up, companies and governments stopped building housing, roads and railways and the economy contracted swiftly and savagely' (Dingle 2008).

The entry for Armadale in the 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) declared that 'views from some points are enchanting, and it is one of the favourite resorts of wealthy Melbourne men, and a great number of fine mansions and villa residences in the locality.' At this date there were three churches, a state school, several private schools, a bank and 'many fine business establishments along High Street', the chief thoroughfare. The commercial strips extended from the railway station eastwards along High Street. In 1910, the tramline along High Street was extended to Tooronga Road, joining the High Street and Glenferrie Road commercial areas and enabling easier access to the locality. In 1915, the tramline along Malvern Road opened, and the Dandenong Road-Wattletree Road tramline opened in 1928 (Victorian Places).

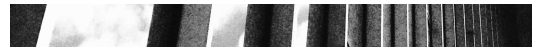
Residential development during the early twentieth century often occurred on newly subdivided estates or filled nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). In the first few decades of the twentieth century, many of the boom-era mansions were converted into shared accommodation, to serve as exclusive guest houses and, more commonly, boarding houses. In the 1930s the locality earned a reputation as a poor area (Context 2006:143). Ultimately, Armadale's proximity to Melbourne and Toorak (considered Melbourne's pre-eminent suburb) meant it was again able to cement its status as one of Melbourne's most prestigious residential addresses and to attract a wealthy class of homeowner.

Place history

The 1901 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan indicated that Avalon Road and Redcourt Avenue had not yet been laid out. The land bound by Dandenong, Orrong and Hampden roads (to Avondale Road at the northern extent) was occupied by five mansions and their lands, with the names Redcourt, Seabrof, Namarong, Avalon and Barnato, after which the existing streets were named. The current alignment of Avalon Road appears to match the driveway to Avalon house.

Avalon Road was laid out as part of the subdivision of the Avalon estate. In February 1903, Richard H. Butler, accountant, notified the Council of his intention to 'open up the vacant land' around his house 'Avalon' (since demolished) between Orrong and Hampden roads, by creating a new road between these two roads and subsequently building ten or twelve houses on the Estate (SHC; LV:V3079/F618). Butler began to subdivide and by September 1905, the full extent of Avalon Road had been laid out (LV:V3065/F989; V3079/F618).

In June 1906, Butler sold 3 Avalon Road (matching the current title boundaries) to William Godley, furnishing warehouseman of Prahran (LV:V3079/F618). In 1906, William Godley was rated for vacant land on Avalon Road. The following year, the 1907-08 rate books noted that William Godley was the owner and occupant of a 12 room brick house on Avalon Road, with a Net Annual Value of 104 pounds (RB). This indicates that the large house was built for Godley in 1907. The quality of the design suggests an architect's involvement, however, no architect has been determined.



The Property Sewerage Plan dating to December 1907 (Figure 2) showed a footprint of the new house, confirmed the owner as William Godley, and listed the agent as J. B. McLean of 37 Loch Street, Camberwell. No record was found of a builder or architect named J. B. McLean, suggesting these were not his occupation. The 1907 footprint of the house matches the footprint of the house in 2017 (see Figure 4); except for the removal of a small single-storey section off the rear elevation and addition of a verandah to the rear (both part of works in the early 2000s).

The house at 3 Avalon Road was let to occupants while William and Janet Godley occupied their house 'Tarra', just to the north on Barnato Grove (*Prahran Telegraph*, 22 Feb 1919:7; *Malvern Standard*, 8 Feb 1919:2; RB). Sands & McDougall Directories confirmed that Godley lived on the north side of Barnato Grove, close to Orrong Road. Godley's probate documents confirm that in 1919, he owned the house 'Nirvana' at 3 Avalon Road (containing 12 rooms, let to occupants) and also owned lot 5 Barnato Grove, Armadale, comprising 'Tarra', a two-storey brick and rough-cast dwelling containing nine rooms (PROV).

Following Godley's death in 1919, 'Nirvana' at 3 Avalon Road was passed to Janet I. Godley, widow, of 'Tarra', Barnato Grove, before it was transferred to Annie G. Woodside of 'Nirvana', Avalon Road, in May 1926; indicating she already occupied the house (LV:V3131/F075). Godley was celebrated as 'one of the oldest, finest, and best respected of Prahran citizens' upon his death in 1919. An article published in the *Malvern Standard* (8 Feb 1919:2) reported that he was the long time proprietor of 'The Burlington' furniture warehouse, until c1918. His funeral was attended by the Mayor of Prahran, Cr E. J. Willis amongst other councillors and clerks.

A sales advertisement for the house in 1939 (*Argus*, 11 Nov 1939) described the 'delightful brick residence' and its interior spaces, including four bedrooms and two maids' bedrooms, conservatory, double garage, and access to Barnato Grove. The Ramsays purchased the house in 1940, retaining it for 40 years until 1980, after which there were a number of subsequent owners (LV:V3131/F075). A photo dating to 1985 (Figure 3) showed that the first floor verandah on the west elevation had been in-filled with brick (with the in-fill removed in the early 2000s). The first floor facade (ground floor not visible) otherwise remains the same in 2017 as it appeared in the 1985 photo (SCC PF).

In the early 2000s, proposed works to the house comprised the demolition of the two-storey wing and a single-storey section, both at the rear of the house. The proposed demolition and additions to the rear of the dwelling by various architects do not match what exists in 2017, suggesting that these major works were not carried out as planned. The two-storey section remains at the rear of the house, and underwent interior alterations and changes to the openings. The single-storey section to the rear of the house was demolished during these works (SCC PF). Drawings of the house in 2001 showed that the first-floor verandah on the west elevation that had previously been in-filled and converted into a bathroom was restored to an open verandah during these works. Openings on the first floor, on the west elevation, were proposed to be altered at this date (not confirmed if carried out) (SCC PF).

The Council Property File indicates that c2002, the large modern building and garage on the Barnato Grove boundary was constructed (replacing two brick garages). In 2003, a permit was granted for a new wrought iron fence to the Avalon Road boundary (SCC PF).

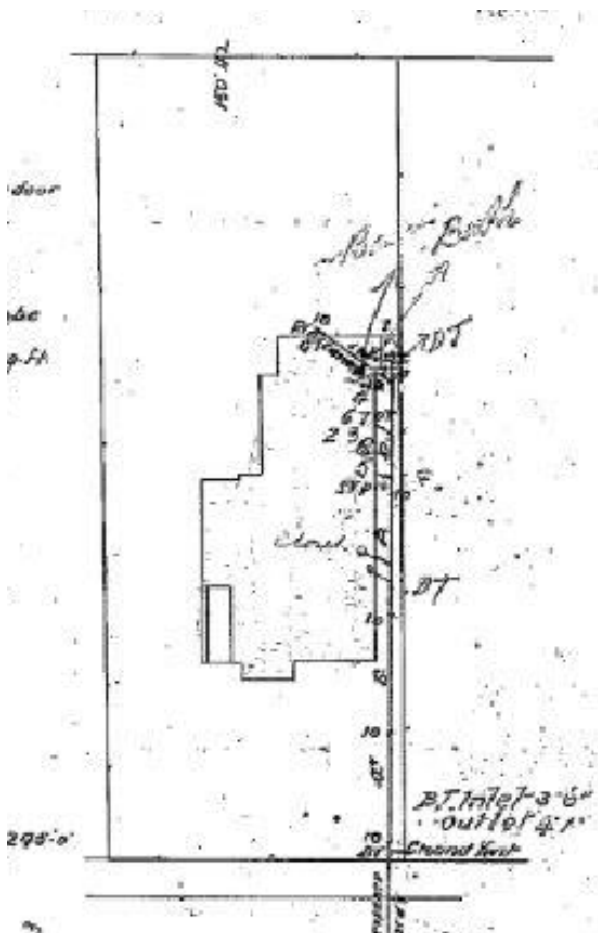
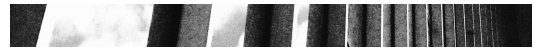


Figure 2. The footprint of the house in 1907, as shown on the MMBW Property Sewerage Plan (PSP).



Figure 3. A photo of the house dating to 1985, showing the in-fill to the first floor verandah on the west elevation (removed in the early 2000s).

Description

The dwelling at 3 Avalon Road is a substantial detached two-storey dwelling set well back from the street within mature grounds. Constructed from red brick with a slate roof, the design displays characteristics of the Federation Art Nouveau style. The dwelling, constructed in 1907, remains in very good condition.

The dwelling has a square hipped roof, with rear outrigger and terracotta fern finials and terracotta Federation star ridge cappings (Figure 4). Four chimney stacks remain to the rear, and one substantial red brick stack is located at the front with simple corbeled tops and terracotta chimney pots (Figure 4). An unusual projecting bay extends from the south elevation, with a curving Art Nouveau parapet, finished in roughcast render (overpainted) (Figure 5). The bay is surmounted by a flying gable supported on decorative timber brackets with simple timber strapping to the gable end (Figure 5). A double height verandah, with a simple flat roof extends on the western side. It is supported on brick piers with round-arched openings and hood moulds to the ground floor, and square, tapered columns and a brick balustrade with Art Nouveau copings to the first floor. At ground floor, the verandah is finished in encaustic tiles with bluestone edging and steps. A secondary gable end is located adjacent to the verandah on the western elevation. Windows are double hung with segmental brick arched heads and hood moulds, and bluestone sills.

The site is bound by a replica Victorian-style iron railing and post fence to the street, constructed in 2003. The front garden has a gravelled return driveway and a modern fountain feature. To the rear is a swimming pool and a substantial detached modern annex building, including a triple garage that was constructed in c2002.



Figure 4. Roof and chimney detail (GJM Heritage/Purcell, June 2016)



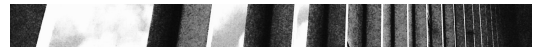
Figure 5. Chimney detail (GJM Heritage/Purcell, June 2016)

Integrity

The house retains a high degree of integrity to the Federation Arts and Craft style, in fabric, form and detail. While the house has undergone some alterations and additions, these do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a fine example of a Federation house.

Comparative Analysis

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale, is of note as a large, representative and highly intact example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style, which flourished in Victoria from the 1890s to the commencement of World War I. With precedents from the United Kingdom and the United States, the resulting Federation Arts and Crafts style was diverse but was based on the ideas of functionalism, the honest use of materials and the integration of the work of artisans and craftspeople into a total design. High quality materials and craftwork was typically included in domestic architecture and elements and decorative motifs with no historical precedent were introduced. This included the sinuous ornament and detail of the Art Nouveau,



which was applied to a range of both traditional and new materials including glass leadlighting, terracotta, wrought iron, glazed tiling, render, timber and pressed metal. Highly innovative practitioners of the Arts and Crafts style in Victoria revolutionised house design by introducing new ideas in planning, including the open plan and other forms such as the butterfly plan and its variants.

The resulting Arts and Crafts house was unpretentious and informal and often picturesque in appearance. Typical characteristics include dominant roofs with gables and hips; wide eaves, with exposed rafters and eaves brackets; tall chimneys; contrasting colour, texture and materials such as roughcast render, timber or cement shingles, pressed metal sheeting and terracotta ornament; and informal window arrangements, including bays, oriels and circular openings, often multi-paned with projecting frames.

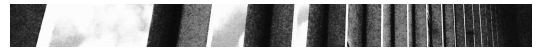
Leading Melbourne architects designed houses in the Arts and Crafts style particularly in the early twentieth century and it was commonly adopted in developing suburbs such as Malvern and Glen Iris and in wealthy, established areas such as Armadale and Toorak. Architects associated with this style included Walter Butler, Rodney Alsop, Robert Haddon, Guyon Purchas and Harold Desbrowe-Anneer, and all these architects designed houses in what is now known as the City of Stonnington.

Within the City of Stonnington a small number of Federation Arts and Crafts style houses are included in the Heritage Overlay on an individual basis. These include:

- Pensford, 528 Orrong Road, Armadale (HO27) 1903
- Thurla, 1 Avalon Avenue, Armadale (HO4) 1903
- Glyn, 224 Kooyong Road, Toorak (HO68, VHR H0735) 1908
- Thanes, 13a Monaro Road, Malvern (HO83, VHR H0953) 1908
- House, 13 Tintern Avenue, Toorak (HO170) c1909
- Tongaboo, 6 Stonnington Place, Toorak (HO285) c1912
- Avalon, 14 Power Street, Toorak (HO332) 1914
- House, 11 Tintern Avenue, Toorak (HO169) 1915
- House, 1088 Malvern Road, Armadale (HO323) 1916
- House, 23 Douglas Street, Toorak (HO307) by 1900
- House 274 High Street, Windsor (HO479) 1918.

Two of these houses have identified significance at the state level. These are Glyn (224 Kooyong Road, Toorak) and Thanes (13a Monaro Road, Malvern). The other dwellings range in construction date (from 1903 to 1918) and in size and detail. They are recognised as distinctive, innovative and evocative examples of the Arts and Crafts style in the City of Stonnington and all display individual characteristics of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. They are noted as follows:

- Pensford, 528 Orrong Road, Armadale (Walter Butler, 1903) is an early and uncommon instance of Art Nouveau influence on domestic architecture in Melbourne and an early example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. The two-storey, red brick house has roughcast render bands and gables, applied half-timbering, a Marseilles tiled roof, eaves with exposed rafter ends, banks of paned windows and Art Nouveau applied decoration on the parapet and chimneys.
- Thurla, 1 Avalon Avenue, Armadale (Walter Butler, 1903) is also an early and uncommon instance of Art Nouveau influence on domestic architecture in Melbourne and an early example of the Federation Arts and Crafts style. The single storey red brick house with extensive roughcast rendering and Marseilles tiled roof, has a large asymmetrically placed front gabled bay with half-timbering, hooded triangular window bays and Art Nouveau-inspired cast cement detailing.
- House, 13 Tintern Avenue, Toorak (A S Eggleston, c1909) is an innovative and evocative example of Arts and Crafts architecture. It is a two-storey rendered brick, slate-roofed dwelling with a front



gable containing a large, distinctive triangular oriel window which is juxtaposed against an otherwise restrained fenestration pattern and projecting bays supported on large brackets.

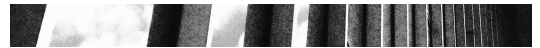
- Tongaboo, 6 Stonnington Place, Toorak (R Alsop, c1912) is described as a well-preserved and successful design. It is an attic-storey house with multiple slate-clad gabled roofs, stuccoed walls, tall brick (over-painted) chimneys, deep eaves with exposed and shaped rafters and joists, timber-framed multi-paned sash windows, and half-timbered and vertical boarded gable ends. The overall character of the design is in the manner of noted British Arts & Crafts designer CFA Voysey.
- Avalon, 14 Power Street, Toorak (Butler & Bradshaw, 1914) is described as a distinguished example of the English Arts and Crafts style, especially as seen in the work of the architect CFA Voysey. The two-storey rendered brick house has a simple wide slate-clad hip roof which extends over wide eaves and is supported on exaggerated eaves bracket. Large areas of the north facade are clad with timber shingles, including a projecting, polygonal balcony.
- House, 11 Tintern Avenue, Toorak (Klingender & Alsop, 1915) is described as an innovative and evocative design with a dominant steeply gabled roof form which fronts the street. The front facade contains a symmetrical arrangement of multi-paned fenestration, large central entrance, protruding shingle-clad balcony and a large, highly distinctive protruding shingle-clad balcony hood.
- House, 1088 Malvern Road, Armadale (Klingender & Alsop, 1916) is described as an imposing house of restrained design and simple massing. It is a two-storey red brick house with projecting shingled balcony, and front loggia with paired columns and steeply angled brackets.
- House, 23 Douglas Street, Toorak (by 1900) is a fine and intact example of the Arts and Crafts style with steeply pitched slate-clad roof, large chimneys, projecting side gables and central verandah with large turned posts. Gable ends are of rough cast render with applied half-timbering and panels of terracotta rosettes.
- House, 274 High Street, Windsor (1918) is described as a distinguished, distinctive and substantially intact eclectic example of Arts and Crafts design. The two-storey, red brick building is asymmetrical in form with slate roof and prominent eaves with exposed rafters and bellcast, shingled bays. The front facade is dominated by an extensive single-clad bay which extends from the eaves to the lower bay windows. Art Nouveau detailing is evident in the window glazing and the original front fence.

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale was built in 1907 at the time when the popularity of the Federation Arts and Crafts style was beginning to reach its peak. The house has not been attributed to a particular architect however the carefully considered design strongly suggests that an architect was involved.

Two houses to the west of Nirvana were designed by prominent Melbourne architect Walter Butler: Thurla, 1 Avalon Road (for his brother Richard) and Pensford, 528 Orrong Road - both constructed c1903 and both included in the Heritage Overlay of the City of Stonnington (see above). Nirvana was built on land purchased from Richard Butler the year before construction. The two-storey house, Pensford, has similarities to Nirvana, including a simple form, a largely undecorated red brick exterior and a curvilinear front parapet. The relatively simple design of Pensford reflects Butler's interest in the Arts and Crafts movement and his dislike of the popular Queen Anne style (he stated in 1902 that he was 'heartily sick of Queen Anne'). Although it has not been established, it is probable that Walter Butler designed Nirvana.

Like the places listed above, Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road displays a range of characteristics that have associations with the innovative Arts and Crafts style and the house remains highly intact to demonstrate these associations.

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale demonstrates the following Federation Arts and Crafts characteristics:



- unpretentious design and simple form
- restrained decorative treatment
- subtle curvilinear Art Nouveau-inspired parapets and balustrades.

Assessment Against Criteria

Following is an assessment of the place against the recognised heritage criteria set out in *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (July 2015).

Criterion D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale is a fine and representative example of a Federation house. It displays typical features of the Federation Arts and Crafts architectural style popular in the first decade of the twentieth century in Armadale and across Melbourne more broadly, including a simple form and design with restrained decorative treatment and subtle Art Nouveau-inspired detailing.

Criterion E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance)*

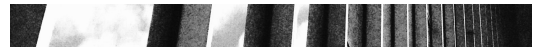
Nirvana, 3 Avalon Road, Armadale, is a well-considered and carefully detailed example of what can broadly be defined as a Federation Arts and Crafts house. The simple design, with main hipped roof, prominent front bay and two-storey side verandah, together with the restrained use of distinctive architectural elements and lack of adornment, presents a picturesque composition of this architectural style. The possible involvement of prominent Melbourne architect Walter Butler in the design is of note.

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a locally significant heritage place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External Paint Controls?	No
Internal Alteration Controls?	No
Tree Controls?	No
Outbuildings or Fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-3?	No
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	No
Incorporated Plan?	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	No



Extent of the recommended Heritage Overlay

To the property title boundary, as indicated by the purple polygon on the aerial below.



Figure 6: 2016 aerial of subject site (Source: Stonnington City Council).

References:

City of Prahran Rate Books (RB), Windsor Ward: 1906-07, entry 8078; 1907-08, entry 107290; 1918-19, entries 9790, 9848.

Context Pty Ltd (2006 & 2009 addendum), *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*.

Dingle, Tony (2008), 'Depressions', in *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne Online*, <<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/>>, accessed February 2017.

Land Victoria (LV), Certificates of Title, as cited above.

Malvern Standard.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plain No. 998 (1901).

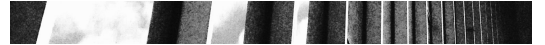
Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Property Sewerage Plan, No. 59900 (December 1907).

Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), Probate documents for Wililam Godfrey, VPRS 28/P3/Unit 900.

Sands & McDougall directories.

Stonnington City Council Property File (SCC PF), including Building and Planning Permit records for the place, provided by Council: File No. 6455.30.

Stonnington History Centre (SHC): Avalon Street streets file, Reg no. 739 accessed August 2016.



The *Argus*.

The Prahran Telegraph.

Victorian Places, 'Armada', 'Malvern' & 'Prahran', < <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au/>>, accessed February 2017.