Heritage Citation – Individual Place

Heritage Place: Semi-detached Pair
Address: 3-5 Mercer Road, Armadale

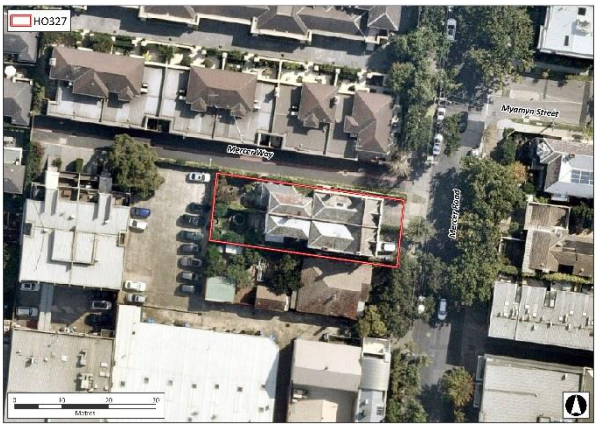
HO Reference: HO327
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 22 March 2022

Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

Year of Construction: 1890



Photograph of 3-5 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO327.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Terrace

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Creating Australia's most prestigious suburbs

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as an individually significant place on the HO.

Controls:	☐	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	☐ Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐ Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The terrace pair at 3-5 Mercer Road, Armadale is significant. Specifically, the form, scale and detailing of the 1890 Revival Jacobean Free Style terraces are of local heritage significance, as well as the original fence posts to the front of the property. Later alterations and additions, side and rear boundary fences, carparking paving and other landscaping are not significant.

How is it significant?

3-5 Mercer Road, Armadale is of local aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington and is rare as a terrace pair built in the Revival Jacobean Free Style.

Why is it significant?

3-5 Mercer Road is an unusual pair of terraces built in the Revival Jacobean Free Style; an architectural style not normally associated with this building form. Key areas of interest include the arcaded verandahs, decorative mouldings and ornamented parapet. (Criterion B)

3-5 Mercer Road has local aesthetic value as a high-quality, fine and intact example of a Revival Jacobean Free Style terrace pair. The building is a prominent structure on Mercer Street owing to the elaborate façade design, high integrity and high visibility. Key features that contribute towards the aesthetic value of the place include the façade symmetry, arcaded verandahs to both floors, timber spindle balustrades, parapet form and detailing, slate gable roof with terracotta ridging, and brick chimneys. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	3-5 Mercer Road is an unusual pair of terraces built in the Revival Jacobean Free Style; an architectural style not normally associated with this building form. Key areas of interest include the arcaded verandahs, decorative mouldings and ornamented parapet.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	3-5 Mercer Road has local aesthetic value as a high-quality, fine and intact example of a Revival Jacobean Free Style terrace pair. The building is a prominent structure on Mercer Street owing to the elaborate façade design,

		high integrity and high visibility. Key features that contribute towards the aesthetic value of the place include the façade symmetry, arcaded verandahs to both floors, timber spindle balustrades, parapet form and detailing, slate gable roof with terracotta ridging, and brick chimneys.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

3-5 Mercer Road, Toorak consists of a pair of two-storey freestanding terrace houses, built in a Revival Jacobean Free Style design. The brick structure is rendered and painted white on the façade, however on the rest of the elevations have been painted a cream colour. The front façade render is in better condition at 3 Mercer Road compared to 5 Mercer Road, with 5 Mercer Road showing clear signs of render failure; this difference may be due to a recent re-rendering of the façade at 3 Mercer Road. It is noted that the verandah arches to 5 Mercer Road are painted brick as opposed to painted render.

The front façade of the property is distinct for its vaulted loggias on both ground and first floors. The façade of each terrace is symmetrical, mirrored and defined by three arched openings with the centre arch wider than the two side arches. Each arch is framed by Tuscan order engaged piers. The ground floor arched openings and gate are secured with full height black spear head fencing. The first floor has black timber spindle balustrades. The first floor engaged piers become Doric above the arched moulding. The top centre arch is adorned with a festoon motif. The façade is capped with a pedimented parapet atop a plastered cornice with precast ball finials. The front façade also has double hung arched timber sash windows and arched timber double doors. The ground level entrance is raised off the street by three steps and is framed with two cast concrete Victorian vase planters. In contrast to the white render of the front façade, the spearhead fencing, timber windows, doors and balustrades are painted black.

The structure has a slate roof with terracotta ridging. Aerial imagery shows three skylights on the roof of the structure. There are four corbelled open faced red brick chimneys extending from structure. Aerial

imagery also shows to matching two-storey rear built forms that are likely to be original. 5 Mercer Road, however, has a small ground floor wrap around addition at the rear.

The side elevations of the property have windows in varying forms, all with a concrete sill. The windows of 5 Mercer Road are in view from the neighbouring street, Mercer Way. There are fixed windows with a semi-circular fanlight that mirrors the arched form of the front façade and double hung timber sash windows. There are three windows on the north façade with the fanlights, all of which have leadlight stained glass of varying designs including white crane motifs.

The Mercer Road street front boundary is demarcated by two central painted brick freestanding piers with corbelled capping. These are remnants of the original fence. There are boundary plantings along the front of the properties. The front setbacks are laid with square concrete slab paving to 3 Mercer Road and stone paving to 5 Mercer Road. The boundary with Mercer Way has a short timber post with timber panelling and lattice painted the same cream colour as the structure.

3-5 Mercer Road is located at the junction of Mercer Road and Mercer Way. It is located close to the main commercial precinct on High Street, Armadale Train Station and the Mercer Road Tram stop. The terrace pair are currently used as residential properties. 3 Mercer Road is considered to be in good condition and has high integrity. 5 Mercer Road is considered to be in fair condition and has high integrity.

• Alterations and Additions

- Addition of roof antenna.
- 3 Mercer Road:
    - Addition of two skylights on 3 Mercer Road.
    - Addition of square concrete paving.
    - Potential re-rendering of façade.
    - Addition of stained glass window (1985)
- 5 Mercer Road:
    - Addition of one skylight on 5 Mercer Road
    - Ground floor wrap around extension at the rear.
    - New fence along Mercer Way.
    - Addition of stone paving.

History

• Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as Stonnington was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided Traditional Owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

The first land sales in what would become Armadale began in 1854 following the surveying of Glenferrie Road and High Street. The suburb of Armadale was formally included in the City of Prahran and, as is the

case with many of the suburbs in Stonnington and surrounds, it received its name from a lone but notable property. Armadale House was built by one James Munro, son of the first keeper of the Prahran pound. On arriving in Australia from his home in Sutherland, Scotland, Munro worked for the stationer business Fergusson and Moore—Fergusson being James Fergusson of Kooyong. Armadale House, built in c.1887, was the first of many grand houses constructed in the suburb in the late 19th century. Munro went on to become Premier of Victoria and, later, Attorney General, before losing all in the economic crash of the 1890s. Following the turn of the century, many of the original 19th century properties faced demolition and subdivision, encouraging growth in early 20th century and the interwar period. While Armadale today enjoys an affluent reputation for its association with the surrounding suburbs of Toorak, Malvern and Kooyong, traces of remnant working class houses can be seen at the small timber workers cottages present in some parts off High Street and near the border with Malvern (Cooper 1924, 268).

- Place History

3-5 Mercer Road was erected in 1890 for Robert Walker (Malvern Rate Books). Due to a lack of archival material, it has proved difficult to ascertain the designer of the house. While its form is characteristic of terrace houses that were built in Melbourne's inner suburbs between the 1850s and 1890s, its Revival Jacobean Free Style is quite unique for this type of dwelling.

Although Robert Walker is listed as the official owner of the site from 1890, the pair of houses were leased out to several different tenants over the years (Sands & McDougall). The earliest known occupants include Percy Watkinson at 3 Mercer Road between 1893-95, and George Nipper at 5 Merer Road in 1892. It is unknown whether Walker himself ever occupied the dwelling.

Walker remained the owner for at least a decade, and by 1903, S. Schuhkrafft is listed as the official proprietor (MMBW 1903). Although not much is known about Schuhkrafft, there is a possibility that he was associated with Schuhkrafft and Co, a prominent paper bag manufacturer and wholesale printing firm at the time. A MMBW Plan from this period shows symmetrically aligned bathrooms and lavatories across the houses (MMBW 1902, 1903). As with Walker, historical sources do not indicate Schuhkrafft's occupancy of 3-5 Mercer Road. They instead note a range of tenants including Elliot Edwin (1904-05), Meta Despard (1906-07) and Wilfried Thompson (1910) at 3 Mercer Road, and Mary Lukey (1904-06) and Robert Mayston (1909-1917) at 5 Mercer Road (Sands & McDougall). As there is no available historical material concerning the pair of dwellings throughout the mid 20th century, this period of time cannot be accounted for.

Archival sources from the late 20th century reveal that Mercer Road was put up for auction in the year 1985. By this period, the dwelling appears to have undergone several alterations, and is described as a 'classic 2 storey Victorian balcony residence, superbly and skillfully renovated throughout to perfectly blend with all the outstanding charm and character of its era…' (3-5 Mercer Road Collection 1985, newspaper clipping). Features included a 'new kitchen that opens to a large informal living room', as well as a brick paved courtyard/garden, a master bedroom with ensuite bathroom, three additional bedrooms, family bathroom, laundry room and shower room. Ornamental features also comprised of a marble mantel, elaborate cornices, ceiling roses and a stained glass window on the stairway. The alterations were likely undertaken by Ian Pockran, a professional renovator who occupied the dwelling during this period. An undated newspaper article by Margaret Simmons notes how the new downstairs bathroom was built in what used to be big fireplace (Simons c.1980s).

In 1991, 3 Mercer Road was also put up for sale. While its renovations were less substantial than those at 5 Mercer Road, an auction flyer for the dwelling indicates several changes from the original, such as a downstairs bathroom and open plan kitchen (3-5 Mercer Road Collection 1991, real estate flyer). While it was auctioned off again in the mid 1990s, 5 Mercer Road appears to still be owned by the original 1990 buyers.

Comparative Analysis

In Armadale there are a range of examples of large Victorian mansions reflecting the suburbs affluent history from the late 19th century. These residences once graced large manicured gardens set on extensive acreage and represented a period of booming development and affluence in Armadale, both in size and architectural detailing. In contrast, the terrace pair at 34 Mercer Road represent a different style of development in the area during the late 19th century, that being the consolidation of multiple dwellings on smaller allotments. Unusually, however, the architect of 3-5 Mercer Road applied architectural detailing usually reserved for larges residences from this era.

No comparative examples of Revival Jacobean Free Style terraces were identified for this assessment, however the following properties from the same era demonstrate some similar architectural qualities:

- **10-12 Northcote Road, Armadale (HO130).** The site consists of a set of late nineteenth century terraces with arcaded verandahs and decorative piers. The roof form is different to 3-5 Mercer Road in that there is no parapet and it contains a hipped slate roof as opposed to a gabled slate roof with terracotta ridges. Just like 3-5 Mercer Road, the front setback is characterised as an open, paved parking area with boundary plantings. Original fence piers are also intact at both properties.
- **34 Mercer Road, Armadale (HO82).** It is noted that the residence at 24 Mercer Road is not a terrace pair, however the building shares a similar form, scale and streetscape presence to 3-5 Mercer Road. The façade is defined by arcaded verandahs and decorative piers on both floors, a decorative parapet (albeit a different style) and masonry construction with render finish.

Given there are very little comparative examples, it is clear that 3-5 Mercer Road is an unusual pair of terraces built in an architectural style not normally associated with this building form. Key features of interest include the arcaded verandahs to both floors, timber spindle balustrades, parapet form and detailing, slate gable roof with terracotta ridging and brick chimneys.

References

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Simons, M. c. 1980s 'Meticulously Rendered.' Newspaper cutting. Item from Collection: 3-5 Mercer Road Armadale, Malvern Collections, ref no. MH13572. Stonnington History Centre Archives.

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Stonnington City Council. 2010. Heritage Citation Report: 10 Northcote Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 151506. Unpublished report. PDF file.

Stonnington City Council. 2010. Heritage Citation Report: 12 Northcote Road, Armadale, Hermes ID 151508. Unpublished report. PDF file.

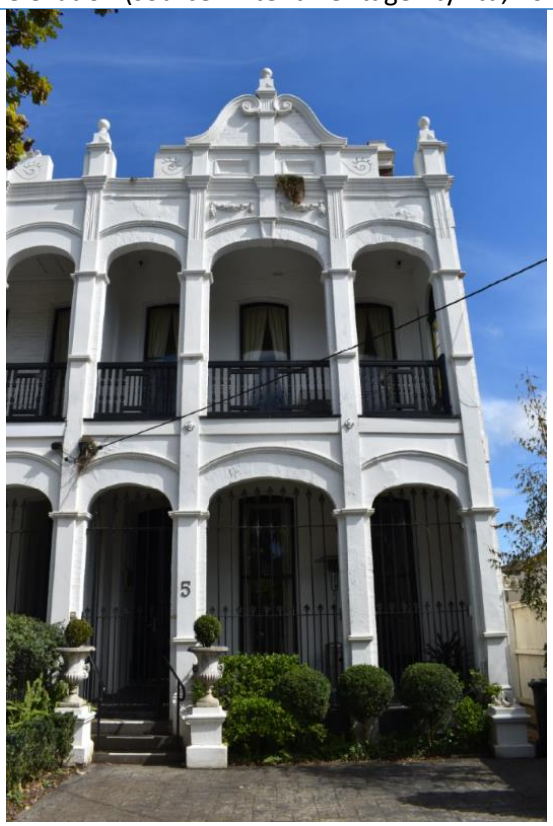
Limitations

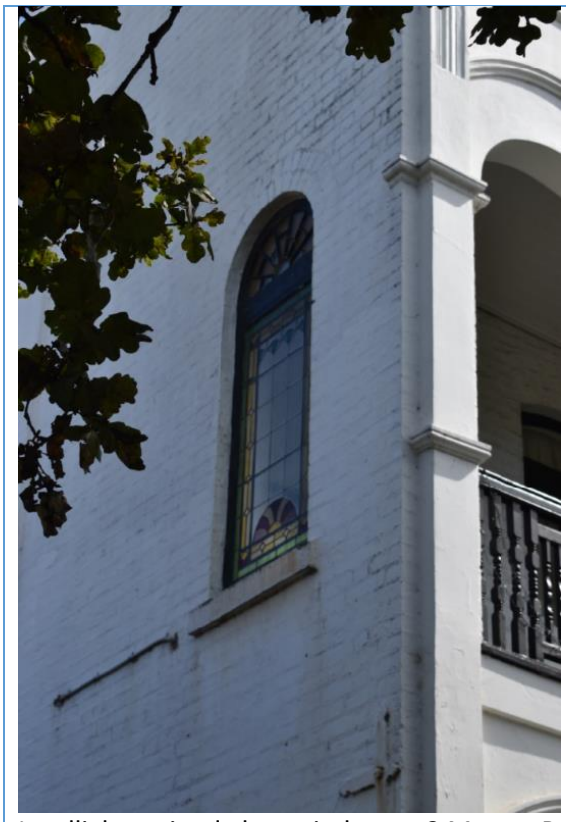
1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images

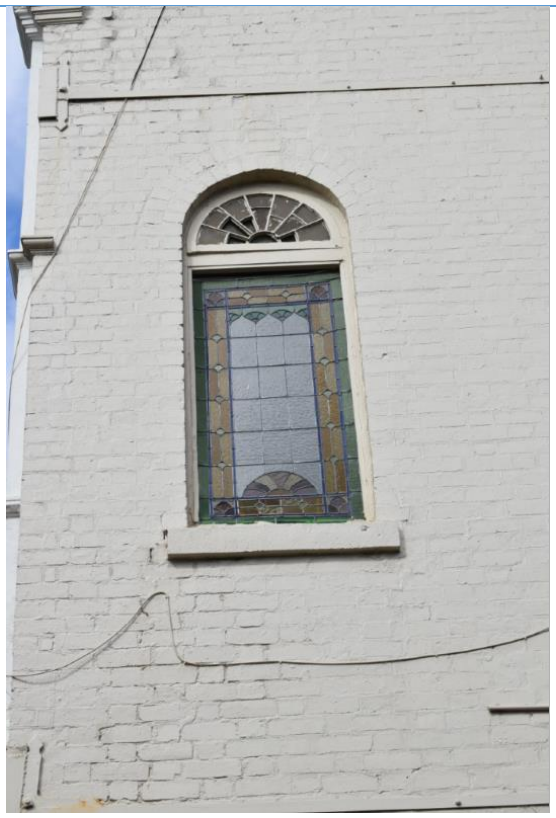




Overview of the terrace pair (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).	View from Mercer Way, showing the rear elevation (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).
 Façade of 3 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).	 façade of 5 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Leadlight stained glass window to 3 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Leadlight stained glass window to 5 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Original fence posts at the front (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Detail of upper façade to 5 Mercer Road (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

Former citation prepared by: Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, 1992.
Updated citation prepared by: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021.