

## MERCHISTON HALL



MERCHISTON HALL SOHE  
2008



h00192 1 merchiston hall  
garden street geelong street  
view



merchiston hall garden street  
geelong balcony detail  
view



merchiston hall garden street  
geelong front entrance



h00192 merchiston hall  
garden street geelong rear



h00192 merchiston hall  
garden street geelong  
fountain

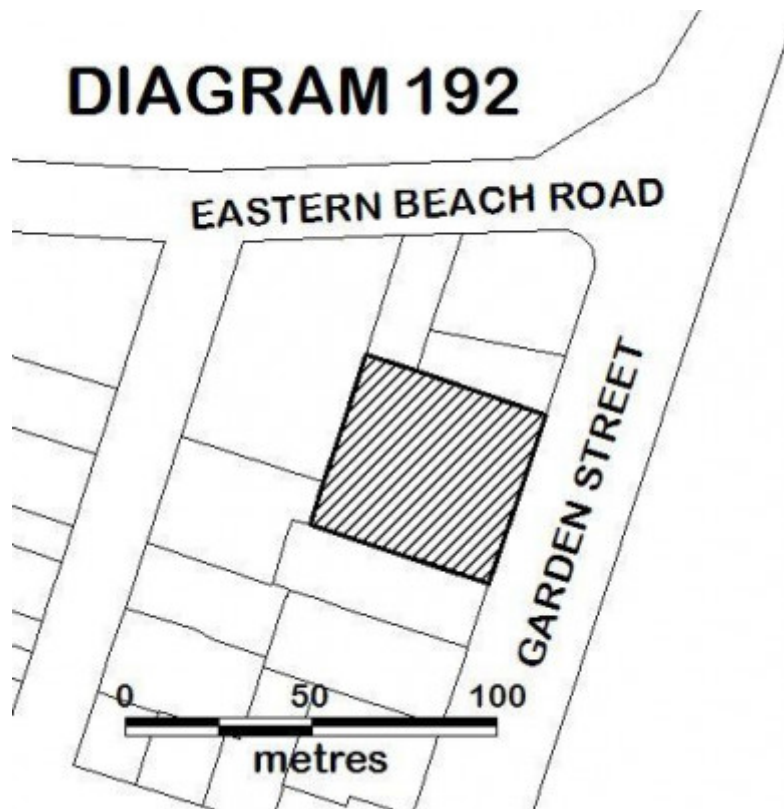


Diagram 192

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**Location**

2A GARDEN STREET GEELONG, GREATER GEELONG CITY

**Municipality**

GREATER GEELONG CITY

**Level of significance**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0192

**Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO14

**VHR Registration**

October 9, 1974

**Amendment to Registration**

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 13, 2007

#### What is significant?

Merchiston Hall, Geelong was built in 1856 as a residence for local businessman and politician, James Cowie, on a commanding site in Geelong. It was designed by local architects, Backhouse and Reynolds, to take advantage of views over Corio Bay and the newly established Botanic Gardens.

James Cowie arrived in Port Phillip in 1840 and had established himself as a Geelong businessman by the following year. He was elected to the first Geelong Council in 1850, became the town's third mayor in 1852, and began a parliamentary career in 1853. Cowie benefited financially from time spent on the Ballarat goldfields and in business, and this enabled him to purchase numerous properties and build the mansion, Merchiston Hall.

Merchiston Hall is a two storey rendered stone building, with quoined corners, a hipped slate roof and overhanging eaves. The Italianate house was designed in simple block form, with four large rooms on each floor, and two main facades facing north and east. To take advantage of the view, the north facade has an elevated verandah and balcony above, supported on eight square piers. The adjoining Garden Street entrance facade has a deeply recessed, central porch framed by piers, and an entablature which divides the two floors. Pilasters frame the openings of the lower facade, while those of the upper facade are framed by decorative architraves. A service wing is located to the west of the main house and a single storey outbuilding, with slate roof, is located further to the west.

From 1872 James Cowie sold a number of his properties, including Merchiston Hall, which was purchased by Geelong businessman, George F. Belcher, that year. He owned the property until his death in 1909. A second floor was added to the service wing in c 1912 for use as a billiard room, and a kitchen was added to the west of the dining room in c 1926-7.

#### How is it significant?

Merchiston Hall, Geelong is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

#### Why is it significant?

Merchiston Hall, Geelong is of architectural significance as an early, large and fine Italianate mansion and as an important work of Geelong architects, Backhouse and Reynolds.

Merchiston Hall, Geelong is of historical significance for its associations with the early development of Geelong and with the Victorian politician, James Cowie.

[Online Data Upgrade Project 2007]

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component.

General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan.

General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works must submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

Construction dates	1856,
Architect/Designer	Backhouse & Reynolds,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Hermes Number	524
Property Number	

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## History

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**The draft statement of significance and the above history were produced as part of an Online Data Upgrade Project 2007. Sources were as follows:**

'Building Progress in Geelong', *The Australian Builder and Practical Mechanic*, no 26, 28 August 1856, p. 208  
I. Wynd (ed), *Investigator, Magazine of the Geelong Historical Society*, vol 2, no 2, May 1967, pp 87-90  
A. Willingham. *Geelong Region Historic Buildings and Objects Study*. Geelong 1986  
W. R. Brownhill. *A History of Geelong and Corio Bay*, 1955  
D. Saunders (ed), *Historic Buildings of Victoria*. Melbourne 1966  
G. E. Robertson. *Victorian Heritage*. Melbourne 1974

## **Extent of Registration**

### **NOTICE OF REGISTRATION**

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying the following places in the Heritage Register:

Number: H0192  
Category: Heritage Place  
Place: Merchiston Hall  
2A Garden Street  
Geelong  
Greater Geelong City

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 192 encompassing all of Lots 1 to 4 on Title Plan 837235.

Dated 7 October 2015  
TIM SMITH  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* G40 8 October 2015 p.2143]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*