



**South Geelong Methodist Church, former
449-471 Moorabool Street**

History

General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Church in Port Phillip, William B. Boyce, applied for a reserve for church purposes at Geelong South as early as 1849, requesting sites in Yarrow (Yarra) and Moorabool Streets.¹ Boyce left the exact siting to the senior Wesleyan minister in the district, William Butters.

News came in 1850 that their first site choice currently had a watch house on it and, instead Allotments 9-14 Section 7A were offered.² Ten years later the church requested a grant, given that substantial improvements had been made to the site. '...A substantial place of worship has been erected on this land which cost more than £1200 and also a cottage...' (worth £150). The trustees

included William Jewell, Samuel Ham, Thomas Foster, William Luxmore and Andrew Young.³

The South Geelong Wesleyan Reserve was first occupied by a brick church erected in 1854 to the design of Benjamin Backhouse⁴ and later enlarged (1861) to accommodate an increasing number of worshippers. This structure, facing Balliang Street, was turned to use as a school in 1869 when the present stone church was built on the reserve. A teachers' residence (since demolished) had been erected in 1859.⁵

The foundation stone of the present church was laid by the prominent evangelist, Matthew Burnett, who was at the time conducting a revival mission in the area.

By the late 1880s, the reserve contained the church (1869) the Wesleyan Sunday school facing Balliang Street, the parsonage near the Balliang Street corner and, at the opposite corner, the Sons of Temperance Hall, built in 1884.⁷

1 RS 4552 29.5.49 letter

2 loc. cit. 20.1.1851

3 Gov. Gaz. 8.10.61

4 Huddle V1.,p.64 cites GA 15.12.53 tenders for building part of chapel

5 R.H. Thomas, *An Index of Victorian Wesleyan Methodist Churches, 1836-1902*, 1970; Property Schedule of the Yarra Street Wesleyan Circuit, Geelong, 1873/6

6 *Investigator* 3.1969 open 27.6.1869

7 RS4552: 18.12.1890 complex was church, school, parsonage and outbuilding

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites

The temperance hall (later the Shire of Barrabool offices, 441 Moorabool Street¹) attracted considerable attention at its opening, with Melbourne parliamentarians in attendance plus around 350 others, all vocal about the current liquor control legislation and proposed remedies. The architects were the prolific A J Derrick & Co. and the builder, J C Taylor.²

South Geelong was a stronghold of Wesleyan Methodism and the church was supported by many local citizens. The close connection between Methodism and the temperance cause is illustrated by the early formation of the Barwon Rose Division of the Order of the Sons of Temperance at the Wesleyan schoolroom in October, 1868.³

Description

Constructed of basalt masonry, the church follows the typical Early English Gothic Revival path, although it is distinguished among this large group by its corner-tower porch entry. Details are executed in cement, at corners and around openings, and the roof is clad with slate. Cement work around the main pointed window appears more recent than others and the spirelet is also presumably new.

The church was once the focus for a major ecclesiastical building group comprised of the residence (demolished), Sunday School (Balliang Street) and temperance hall (altered).

External Integrity

New sympathetic spire to corner tower, probably new lights in the main western window and the fence has been removed (presumed timber picket).

Streetscape

Still recognizable as part of the former Wesleyan complex, albeit separated by intrusive new uses.

Significance

Historically, a gathering place over a long period and one of the few remaining civic buildings to serve the South Geelong community.

Architecturally, a simple and incomplete design, but it possesses a distinctive corner tower and forms part of an ecclesiastical building group which mainly follows Medieval sources, except for the temperance hall.

1 GHRC notes
2 GA 17.7.84
3 J.H. Botrell, 'Early History of South Geelong,' *Geelong Advertiser*, 21 October, 1933