

PLACE IDENTIFICATION FORM

ADDRESS

81 Oxley Road

TYPE

- Single Residence
- Shop
- Office
- Landscape feature
- View
- Multiple Unit Res.
- Outbuildings
- Industrial Building
- Public building
- Other church.

TITLE

Auburn Uniting Church and associated buildings.

EXISTING DESIGNATION

- HBR  GBR  AHC  NT  VAS

STREETSCAPE LEVEL

- 1  2  3   
 SIGNIFICANT  SIGNIFICANT   
 STREET TREES KERB & GUTTERS

GRADING

- A  B  C  D  E   
 KEYNOTE BUILDING

RECOMMENDED FOR

- HBR/GBR  AHC  URBAN CONSERVATION AREA   
 VAS  PLANNING SCHEME PROTECTION   
 CULTURAL LANDSCAPE  OTHER

SURVEY DATE *May 91.*  
 NEG FILE *01.05.-13.*  
 Title  
 Vol.  
 Fol.

THEME

- Early Settlement
- Mansions
- Victorian Garden Suburb
- Municipal dev.
- 1870s growth
- Garden villas
- Working enclaves
- Commercial Centres
- Edwardian Prosperity
- Interwar Housing
- Flats and Offices



CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

Date *1888-1890.*  
 Architect *Alfred Dunn.*  
 Builder *Brewer Bros,*  
 Elements *Clifton Hill (Church).*  
*Manse, church, stables, hall,*  
*caretaker's cottage etc.*  
*incl. 83 Oxley Rd., and 3 Heppburn St.*

- Contributing garden
- Landmark tree
- Original or early hard landscape layout
- Original or early fence

NOTABLE FEATURES/SIGNIFICANCE

*See Butler, Upper Hawthorn Study*  
 See attached

INTEGRITY Good   
 Fair   
 Poor

CONDITION Good   
 Fair   
 Poor

*SEE  
 RJW*

CROSS REFERENCED INFORMATION

Associated significant garden

## 81 OXLEY ROAD

### AUBURN UNITING CHURCH

#### History

The former Wesleyan Methodist Church complex at 81 Oxley Road and 3 Hepburn Street, which comprises church, Sunday school, parsonage and caretaker's cottage, was constructed between 1888 and 1890 from the designs of the prolific architect of Wesleyan properties, Alfred Dunn.<sup>28</sup>

In October 1884 the Trustees of the Wesleyan Church, Hawthorn, invited "competitive designs for church, school and parsonage" on their new site on the corner of Oxley Road and Hepburn Street.<sup>29</sup> This was on the prestigious Hepburn Hill in the vicinity of three large 1850s houses owned by district notables Mr. Justice Robert Molesworth, John Hepburn and Sir Charles Gavan Duffy.<sup>30</sup> Alfred Dunn obtained the first place in this competition.<sup>31</sup> Tenders for the erection of a Wesleyan Church, Sunday School, parsonage and caretaker's cottage were let by Dunn in April 1888.<sup>32</sup> The following month, Dunn accepted the tender of Brewer Bros. of Clifton Hill for the erection of the church.<sup>33</sup> By March 1889 all the complex had been completed except for the construction of the caretaker's cottage and fencing around the buildings. In that month, Dunn advertised for tenders for the "erection of cottage, fencing and gates to church, schools and cottage in Oxley Road, Hawthorn (Vic)."<sup>34</sup> By 1890, the Hawthorn rate book noted the completion of a school-house and caretaker's four-roomed cottage.<sup>35</sup>

The church, which was visible for miles around, was the fourth Methodist Church built in Hawthorn. The Sunday School, which was erected facing Hepburn Street, stood between the church and the road with Thomas Parsons as caretaker.<sup>36</sup> The Hawthorn Methodist circuit was recognised as of great importance with one of the largest church memberships in Victoria and the finest set of properties, churches, schools and parsonages. The church was a building considered to be the finest Wesleyan Church in Victoria with

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28. ABCN 12 May 1888; Hawthorn RB 1890 (Nos. 5441-2).

29. *Argus* 23 October 1884 (3).

30. Graeme Butler, *Upper Hawthorn*. Commercial Area Conservation Study, 1983, pp. 144, 147.

31. *Victoria and its Metropolis*, 1888, Vol. II, p.516.

32. ABCN 14 April 1888.

33. *Ibid.* 12 May 1888.

34. *BEMJ* 30 March 1889 (sup. p.5)

35. See footnote 1.

36. Butler, p.144.



## 81 Oxley Road continued

substantial associated Sunday School and parsonage buildings. The Hawthorn circuit was responsible for the foundation of Methodist Ladies' College,<sup>37</sup> a leading educational establishment for girls.

The Wesleyan Methodists, with a number of other Methodist sects, became part of the Methodist Church of Australasia in 1902 which, in 1977, joined with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form the Uniting Church of Australia.<sup>38</sup>

### Description

The complex comprises the magnificent towered church, a Sunday school, manse, caretakers house, stables, garden and perimeter fence. The centrepiece of the design is architect Alfred Dunn's church. This competition winning design is a monument to the use of Romanesque Revival for church design. The dominant element is the corner tower of massive proportions. This rises in five stages from a stone plinth. It does not incorporate the main entry to the church as so often happens in this plan arrangement. The lower three levels emphasise the squareness of the tower with a solid wall character penetrated by few openings. Then above, the corners change from square pilasters to circular columns to become turrets as the fourth stage expresses the roof. Between the stripped corner columns are a double row of slender light columns supporting a brick arcade above. This occurs on four sides to provide a light balance to the solidity below. The spine of softened pyramidal form is embellished by gables on each side and capped by a tall metal finial.

The body of the church adjoining is a gabled affair with a prominent first floor denoted by the flanking balconies. Entry is through a central colonnaded entry supporting a decorated rendered pediment. On the side elevation, the large transept window occupies two stages. The whole design is embellished by two tone brickwork in dower Hawthorn brown and red. Stripes of red run through at several string courses, in bands to the pilasters and to the arched openings.

The Manse adjoining is a simple brick essay in picturesque housing appropriate to the church context. At the rear is a plain but impressive brick hall, and beyond a caretakers house and stables again in brick. A brick fence defines the boundary and completes the complex.

### Assessment

Dunn was clearly reinterpreting the 1867 Reed and Barnes Independent Church in Collins Street in this design, with a more literal Lombardic design using half round arches. The basic form is similar, with the corner tower, prominent first floor and gabled sides. Dunn's success here has been to reduce further the conformist image of the Independent church, and use a

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<sup>37</sup>. Ibid and *Victorian Churches*, ed. Miles Lewis, National Trust, Melb. 1991, p.74.

<sup>38</sup>. Ibid. Chart "The Nonconformist and Presbyterian Church in Victoria".

## 81 Oxley Road continued

strong ecclesiastical image without the ordered Gothic revival stamp which the Catholics and Anglicans used. This was in marked contrast to the mainstream decorated Gothic of Wesley Church at 148 Lonsdale Street which Joseph Reed designed in 1857 and which for all intent and purposes looks like an Anglican Cathedral.

Dunn designed a second church for the Wesleyans at the same time at Preston. He chose similar materials there, Hawthorn brown bricks with red dressings but opted for a Gothic design instead of Romanesque, albeit in highly non conformist form. The Preston example is substantially less elaborate than the Hawthorn Church but both stand out for their now apparently modern design, appearing several decades younger than their actual age.

Few other Romanesque churches of this kind were constructed. The more common "blood and bandage" Romanesque claim more followers, particularly in the early twentieth century e.g. George Allan's 1891 Hawthorn Presbyterian Church. Simple designs such as the 1883 Salvation Army Citadel at 24 Victoria Street, Prahran bears no comparison with the complexity of this design. As a consequence this church by Dunn is the best example of Lombardic Romanesque design in Victoria.

### Significance

### State

1. Architecturally significant as the best example of Lombardic Romanesque church design in Australia, for the major complex amongst Wesleyan establishments in Victoria, and for the major work by the architect Dunn.
2. The Auburn Uniting Church has historical significance as a major public building complex, comprising church, Sunday school, parsonage and caretaker's cottage. The church was recognised as "the finest Wesleyan Church in Victoria" with associated school and parsonage which, "while simpler, are also substantial, of the same materials, and sympathetic in style".<sup>39</sup> The complex is significant for its early associations with Wesleyan Methodism, an important religious congregation in colonial Victoria, and with the influential Hawthorn Methodist circuit. With one of the largest church memberships, this circuit had the finest set of properties (churches, schools and parsonages) in Victoria and was responsible for the foundation of MLC, a leading educational establishment for girls.
3. Historically significant as a local landmark and indicative of the importance of this precinct as the heart of Hawthorn.

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<sup>39</sup>. Ibid. p.74.



LOCATION: UNITING CHURCH, SUNDAY SCHOOL & HALL, FORMER WESLEYAN  
METHODIST CHURCH COMPLEX, HEPBURN STREET

MMPS ZONE: Residential C

BUILT: 1888

HISTORY - The foundation stone of the Uniting Church Hall (former Wesleyan Methodist Church), Hepburn Street, was laid 26 July 1888.<sup>1</sup> By 1890, a school house and caretaker's four roomed brick cottage are noted in the Rate Book.<sup>2</sup> The Church was built on the top of the hill (in the middle of the three large houses from the 1850s, owned by Molesworth, Hepburn and Gavan Duffy)<sup>3</sup>, on the pick of the blocks of the Hepburn Hill Estate. The site was said to have been chosen by Thomas Vasey, long-time Hawthorn resident who later lived nearby in Goodall Street.<sup>4</sup> The church was visible for miles around and was the fourth Methodist Church built in Hawthorn. The Sunday School was erected facing Hepburn Street, between the church and the P.O.<sup>5</sup> with Thomas Parsons caretaker.<sup>5</sup>

It was said that the Hawthorn Methodist circuit had one of the largest church memberships in Victoria and the finest set of properties, churches, schools and parsonages. It was responsible for the establishment of Methodist Ladies College.<sup>6</sup>

Prolific architect of Wesleyan properties, Alfred Dunn, won first place in the competition for the Wesleyan Church, Sunday School and Parsonage and advertised for tenders, for their construction in the Australian Builder and Contractor's News of 14.4.1888.<sup>7</sup> Completion was near when Dunn required tenders for fencing the complex and the erection of Thomas Parsons' caretaker's cottage in March 1889.<sup>8</sup>

DESCRIPTION - Adopting the Italian Romanesque as the style (see Mateva Cathedral, Trani Cathedral, both southern Italy) with the basilican gabled nave and side-aisles form and the attached, asymmetrically placed campanile; this dichrome brick and stucco church also adopts Roman motifs such as the Corinthian order pilasters to the tower and the adapted Ionic orders to the colonettes supporting gallery arches and the entrance portal.

Gabled forms dominate the traditional cruciform plan, providing vehicles for checker brick patterns, with corbelled and foliated stucco tympanums to the aisle gables in contrast. Arcading in a giant form, on the south facade, is repeated within the main windows and the tower belfry and parapet. Candle-snuffer pinnacles top each faceted corner tower and flank the gablets set into the spire's slated roof. Detailing such as the stopped pilasters, placed centrally in each tower facade are repeated in contemporary commercial facades such as (760-4) Glenferrie Road and as late as Beswicke's 773-9 Glenferrie Road of 1924.

LOCATION: UNITING CHURCH, SUNDAY SCHOOL & HALL, FORMER WESLEYAN  
METHODIST CHURCH COMPLEX, HEPBURN STREET

DESCRIPTION (Cont'd.)

Triple oculi pierce the tympanum of each major window arch, providing ventilation to the roof within. Comparable churches such as the Presbyterian Church, North Melbourne (1877); St. Judes, Carlton (1866-70) and the Independent Church, Melbourne (1866-7) are all earlier, but only the latter rivals this church's successful combination of colour, detail and mass.

Internally, unlike Romanesque precursors, the ceiling is flat and coffered and the walls simply decorated with applied trabeation.

The surrounding complex does not have the same dramatic massing or detail, but is in general sympathy to the church, depicting the common construction date of the complex.

The Sunday School's main window which was common to those in the church has been obscured; thus weakening the link with the church. (Refer 81 Oxley Road for Parsonage).

**INTEGRITY** - Generally original (church) except for the replacement of the picket fence and garden plots; the Sunday School has been extended at its south end, the main arcaded light having been part blocked by an addition; the caretaker's residence has also been more sympathetically added to on the south side; and the former stables amended.

**STREETSCAPE** - The most important element in the residential-civic precinct (2) and perceivable as a visually homogenous complex.

**SIGNIFICANCE** - Architecturally, an original, outstanding and prominently sited representative of a relatively small church style-group (Italian Romanesque) and contributive to a civic-residential precinct: of State importance.

Historically: a major public building in Hawthorn built by a congregation also responsible for the regionally important M.L.C. complex and thought of as the finest Wesleyan complex in Victoria: of regional importance.

**ENHANCEMENT** - Prepare a detailed restoration plan for enhancement of the complex which would include rebuilding the picket fence and repainting trim in original colours.





REFERENCES: (Abbreviations Key: Appendix 5)

1. BS 20.7.88
2. RB 1890 (5441-2)
3. Hepburn Hill Estate Sale Plan 24.10.1885, (HHS); Hawthorn Borough Plan 1866
4. Smith, p.49
5. D 1895, 1907
6. Smith p.49;  
M.L.C. Records
7. Sutherland, p.516
8. REMJ 30.3.89, sup. p.5

LOCATION: UNITING CHURCH, SUNDAY SCHOOL & HALL, FORMER WESLEYAN  
METHODIST CHURCH COMPLEX, HEPBURN STREET

SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPLEX:

This extensive complex of church related buildings was, unlike most other similar groups, built within approximately one year and thus possesses historical importance for that fact and architectural importance from its consequent visual cohesiveness.





LOCATION: FORMER WESLEYAN PARSONAGE  
81 OXLEY ROAD  
MMPS ZONE: Residential C  
BUILT: 1888

HISTORY - 81 Oxley Road was part of a complex of new buildings designed by architect, Alfred Dunn, for the Methodist Church in 1888. Built on the Hepburn Hill Estate, it was to replace older buildings on the north side of Burwood Road. The Church (now Uniting) foundation stone was laid in July 1888. In the same year there was a request to build a parsonage with hollow walls.<sup>1</sup>

During the 1890s,<sup>2</sup> Rev. Ed. Nye was the minister, followed by Rev. Robert Philp.

DESCRIPTION - A two-storeyed dichrome (pink and black) brick house with a main slated and hipped roof and gabled protruding room bays which once trimmed a verandah and empathised with those on the adjoining church. Segment-arched openings are linked by string courses at impost level which are echoed by storey-line coursing, connected to keystones. Coupled lancet roof vents hint at the Medieval revival style used as do the banded brick chimneys (red brick bands).

A notable original garden exists at the frontage.

INTEGRITY - A two-level timber verandah has been removed and a porch added; truss work and finial details have been removed from gables; ridge cresting and chimneys may also have gone; the picket fence has been removed.

STREETSCAPE - Integral part of Medieval revival styled church complex and contributor to civic-residential precinct (2).

SIGNIFICANCE - Architecturally, a much altered building which has importance only as a complement to the church : of local importance.

Historically, a prominent quasi-public building connected with an early Hawthorn institution : of local importance.

ENHANCEMENT - Consider restoration of verandah (refer architect's perspective, held at church and parts of original posts still locatable by caretaker); repaint trim in original or typical colours; record garden planting and layout for restoration data.



REFERENCES: (Abbreviations Key: Appendix 5)

1. ABCN 14.4.1888;  
BS 25.5.1888
2. D 1895-7





3 Hepburn Street  
(part of Auburn Uniting Church)  
complex