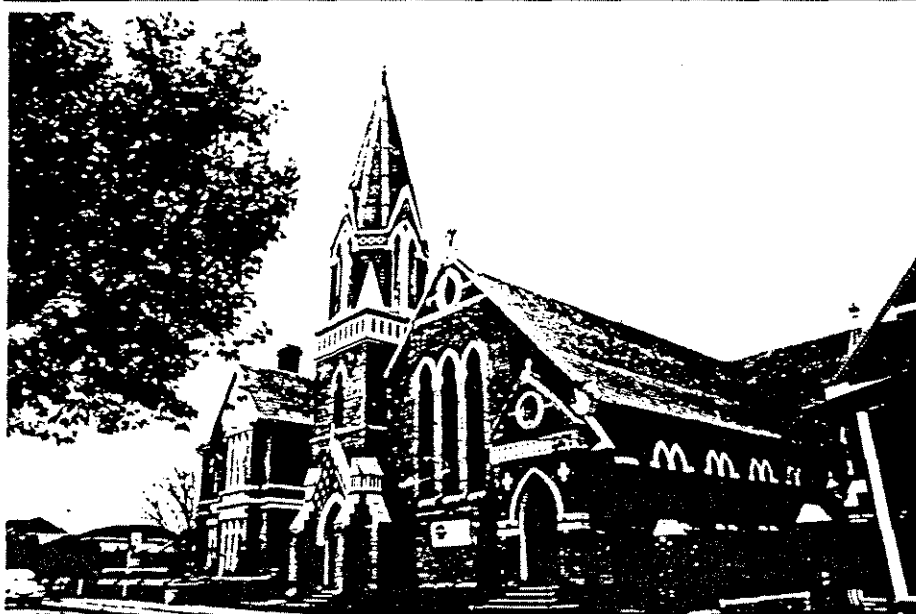


21 & 23 Highbury Grove, Former Wesleyan Church and Manse

Original Use: Wesleyan Church and Manse
Date of Construction: Church: 1887¹
Manse: 1889²
Architect: Church: Nathaniel Billing³
Manse: Oakden, Addison and Kemp⁴

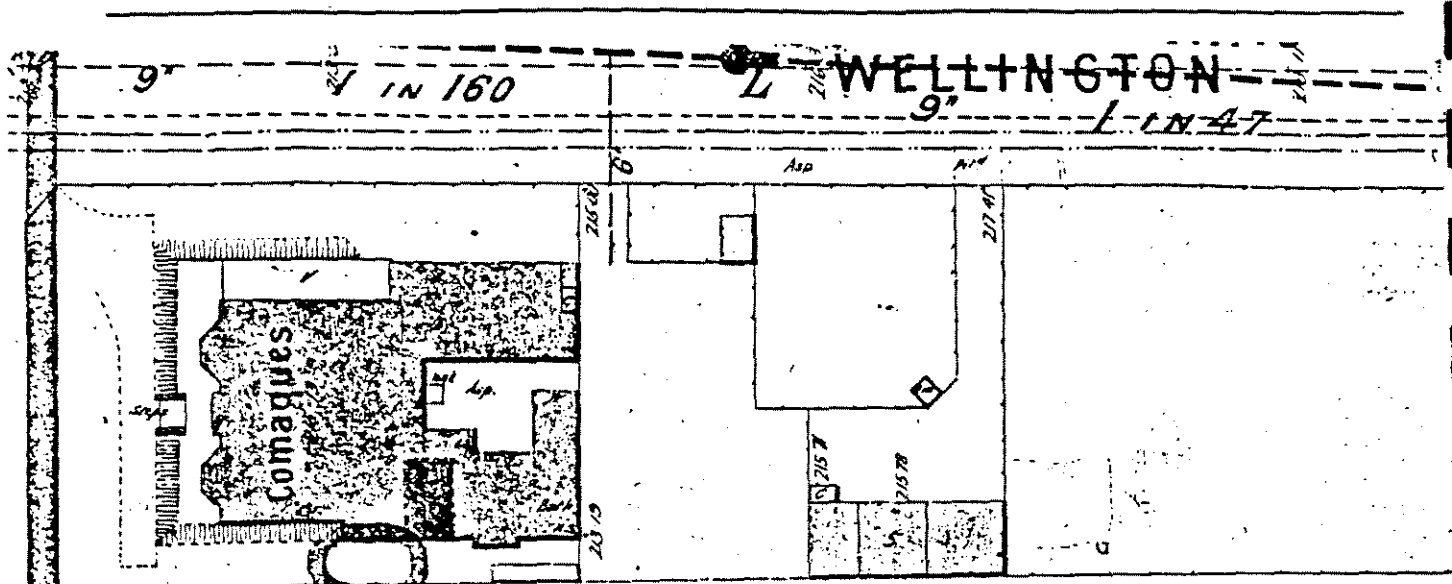
DESIGNATION A
CITATION NO.66



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

In December 1874 a timber church building was erected on this site for worship by Kew's Wesleyan community⁵. With the growth of the congregation the foundation stone of a larger church building was laid by the Hon. James MacBain on April 1887⁶. With seating accommodation for over 350 persons, the building cost £4,000⁷. The Rev. Francis Robert Wilson was the Minister of the church at that stage⁸ and it was several years later, in 1891, that the two-storey brick parsonage was ready for his occupation⁹. The initial N.A.V. for the manse was £120¹⁰.

The church has a well balanced composition with a gabled form offset by a spire set to one corner. It is built in polychromatic brickwork, however is quite subdued in its application compared with other buildings of the period. The manse, although only two years later, is far more adventurous in its architecture. It was designed by Kemp, who also built 'Dalswraith' (q.v.), and although this building is in a far more simple form, it repeats the Old English vocabulary of that building. This is particularly apparent in the grouping of the windows and the decorative plaster panels under the gable unit; elements that were to become popular by the turn of the century.



'Comaques', 1903 (MMBW Plan No.1574)

SIGNIFICANCE

'Comaques' is of significance as a substantially intact large Italianate house of the late Victorian period and as such, is one of the key Victorian buildings to have been built in Kew. It is also of significance for having been built by the leading architect, Alfred White for his own use.

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

GBR: N/A

RNE: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

National Trust: Not currently listed.

¹ City of Kew, Rate Books, 1891

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*, 1900

⁶ M.M.B.W., 'Plan of Kew - 1574', Scale:40 feet to 1 inch, May 1903

The scale of this building, its substantially intact nature and its associations with a leading Victorian architect, Alfred White, suggest that this building is suitable for nomination to the Historic Buildings Council.

These buildings are significant as a pair of substantially intact late nineteenth century ecclesiastical buildings and through their associations with leading architects of the period, as described in the consultant's citation. However, they are stylistically representative of their period rather than unusual, and are not of a particularly early date either in terms of the styles employed or in comparison to a significant proportion of Victoria's ecclesiastical building stock. It is therefore possible that they would be more appropriately classified B than A.

Nonetheless, it has become somewhat of a custom in conservation studies to classify such groups as being of state significance, leaving the onus of judgement to the Historic Buildings Council. Given that only four specifically ecclesiastical buildings (or groups of buildings) in Kew have been classified A (Xavier Chapel, Holy Trinity Church and Rectory, 39 Sackville Street and the former Presbyterian Church and Manse), and that the first two at least are likely candidates for Registration, it is not inappropriate that this building should retain its A classification and be nominated for Registration.

It should be noted that the adjacent church hall, as an integral part of the group, should also be considered if a nomination is made to the Historic Buildings Council.

The Registration of ecclesiastical buildings has proven problematic to the Historic Buildings Council, as they constitute a very large body of buildings, many of which are of relatively great age, given Victoria's brief period of European occupation, and undoubted design quality and social significance. While no assurance can therefore be given regarding the likely outcome of the consideration of the former Presbyterian Church and Manse by the Council, it is recommended that they be nominated for registration.



SIGNIFICANCE

The former Wesleyan Church and Manse are of significance as a pair of substantially intact ecclesiastical buildings of the late nineteenth century, that while not stylistically related, are both good examples of the work of leading architects of the time and are designed in sympathy to each other.

HERITAGE LISTINGS

HBR: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

GBR: N/A

RNE: Recommended for inclusion on the register.

National Trust: File No.2594

1 Rogers, D., *A History of Kew*, p.148

2 Architects' Index, University of Melbourne

3 *ibid.*

4 *ibid.*

5 Rogers, *loc.cit.* *

6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*

9 City of Kew, Rate Books, 1891.

10 *ibid.*