

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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<b>Name</b>	Former Armadale Methodist/Presbyterian Church & Hall	
<b>Address</b>	69 Denbigh Road ARMADALE	<b>Significance Level</b> A2
<b>Place Type</b>	ChurchChurch Hall	
<b>Citation Date</b>	2010	
<b>Assessment by</b>	Context P/L	



**Recommended Heritage Protection** VHR - HI - PS Yes

### History and Historical Context

*The Armadale mission*

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In 1876 the Rev Murdoch MacDonald first Minister of the Toorak Presbyterian Church, visited the district of the brickfields in Orrong Road, between Malvern Road and High Street and established a Sunday School with nine teachers and approximately 53 scholars. The school was too close to Toorak Church to be created as a separate congregation and the church hierarchy in Toorak instead decided that it should operate as a 'mission'. A church hall was constructed in Orrong Road at a cost of just over £1,000. Mr Valantine was appointed as missionary to the area.

The mission was a success and by 1890, it had virtually been transformed in to a church with morning and evening services every Sunday. In response to the changing circumstances the Toorak management proposed to make over to the mission congregation their land and building in Orrong Road, with power to sell the property and apply the proceeds towards the purchase of a new site and to make a contribution towards the cost of providing a stipend for a Minister (£150 for the first year, £100 for the second year and £50 for the third year).

## *The Denbigh Road church*

The mission accepted the offers and in October 1890 the church identified land in Denbigh Road that was suitable for the construction of a Church. It arranged to hand over the Orrong Road site in exchange for the new land. In February 1891 a Board of Management was elected and preparations were made to build a brick building to seat 300 for church and Sunday School purposes. The architects were Billing and Son and the Church was named 'St. Andrew's'. The contract for its construction was tendered out in April 1891. The work took about four months to complete, and the first services in the new building were conducted on 16 August 1891. The depression of the 1890s hit the church hard and in 1892, the Minister voluntarily suspended £50 of his £400 stipend for the years 1892-94.

By the turn of the century the growth of the congregation meant that the hall was no longer adequate for the congregation. At a meeting of the congregation of the Armadale Presbyterian Church, held in 1902, it was unanimously decided to proceed at once with the erection of a new church, owing to the difficulty of providing accommodation for the present congregation in the existing building. The foundation stone of the new church was laid in September 1902 by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Right Rev. Alexander Hay. The new church had been designed by architects Sydney Smith & Ogg, and built by Arthur Parker. It was built in front of the original church, which was converted to the Sunday School.

## *Sydney Smith & Ogg*

Sydney Smith & Ogg were prominent architects in late 19th century and early 20th century Victoria, whose designs were prolific across Melbourne. They were well-known for the design of many commercial and office buildings, hotels, breweries and several branches of the State Savings Bank. Sydney Smith & Ogg came into being in 1889, when Sydney W. Smith took Charles A. Ogg into partnership. The firm had originally been established by Sydney Smith's father in 1852, and Smith carried on the family business after his death in 1881. Prior to partnering with Smith, Ogg had worked for five years at Reed Henderson & Smart. In 1921, the firm became Sydney Smith Ogg & Serpell after C.E. Serpell joined as partner.

## *Evolution of Armadale Presbyterian Church*

The previous Church continued as a Sunday School. In his text, *Sundays at Kooyong Road*, Brian Lewis (former Professor of Architecture at the University of Melbourne) describes the church in c1920:

*Our class is already in place at the side in front, but the rest move from the central block of pews to accommodation just like ours behind us. The empty pews are a sort of quarantine barrier between us and the side rows of the girls' classes. The Bible Classes move out of the main hall into the big vestry at the entrance.*

Various changes to the church and church hall were made throughout the 20th century. Following World War I, honour boards were erected to commemorate those servicemen associated with the church, who lost their lives in the war. In 1923, alterations were made to the Sunday School and in 1936 a memorial window was unveiled to commemorate the life of A. W. Jack (choirmaster for 30 years, leader of the young men's bible class and an elder of the church). In 1953 the

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church inherited a property at 5 Wattletree Road under the will of W. McIlwrick, a solicitor of the Board of Management from 1900-1936. It was put into service as a manse, the extensive gardens providing sufficient land for the construction of a tennis court.

## *The Uniting Church*

The Presbyterian Church in Denbigh continued to function until 1977 when the Uniting Church was established through a merger of large parts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and the Congregational Union of Australia. In Armadale, the Union was to lead to the amalgamation of the Kooyong Road and Denbigh Road congregations, which occurred on 1 August 1979. From 1 November 1979, church services were alternated between the Kooyong Road and Denbigh Road churches. In 1982, at the Annual General Meeting of the Uniting Church a motion was passed that a committee be formed to consider which of the two church buildings should be retained for church purposes. The committee decided in favour of retaining the Kooyong Road Church. Late in 1985, the Denbigh Road church was let to the Korean Church of Melbourne. The site was finally sold in 1999. It has since been converted in to apartments. The development won the City of Stonnington's 'best heritage design: alternations and additions' award in 2002. *Sources* The Argus, 2 May 1902.

Foundations Stone, 69 Denbigh Road

Lewis, Brian. *Sundays at Kooyong Road, Melbourne, Hutchinson of Australia, 1976.*

Parnaby, Joy. *Armadale Uniting Church: A Brief History*, Armadale, Melbourne, Armadale Uniting Church, 1996.

State Library of Victoria, Pictures Collection, Image H32492/5565.

*Stonnington News*, June 2002.

Stonnington Local History Service. MH 10752.

## **Relevant Historical Australian Themes**

*Themes from Stonnington Thematic Environmental History:*

10.2 Worshipping

10.2.1 Founding churches

10.2.4 Churches as a reflection of changing demographics

## **Description**

### **Physical Description**

The former St Andrew's Methodist (Presbyterian) Church of 1902 at 69 Denbigh Road, Armadale, sits at the front of its site. Directly behind it is the Sunday School, which was built as the original church in 1891. Both buildings were converted to flats in the 1990s.

### *Church*

The former church is a striking building in a Greek cross plan with a large fleche over the crossing. The walls are red brick with limestone dressings, and the roof is covered with slates with simple terracotta cresting.

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The facade is dominated by a wide gable front. A gabled entrance porch is located at the centre, flanked by asymmetrical elements. On the right-hand side is a curved ambulatory-like space. To the left is the single-storey base of a square tower (the tower was not completed). At the apex is stone detailing in the form of seven blind lancet arches topped with a stone crocket. Below is a row of five lancet windows, all of the same height, beneath a continuous label mould.

The gable ends of the transepts are expressed differently. The apex is decorated with an incised stone diaper pattern, beneath a similar crocketed finial. The five narrow lancet windows are stepped so that the group of them forms a large lancet outline. These windows also have a continuous label mould.

The remaining windows to the church, and the front entrance, are all single lancet forms with a label mould. Architecture professor Brian Lewis described the interior as it was in the early 20th century, long before its residential conversion:

*It is a stubby cross in plan, with the western arm for the choir at a slightly higher level than the rest. Despite the cross-plan the building is designed as an auditorium, with aisles from the five doors converging down a gentle slope to the centrally placed communion table, above it is the pulpit dead centre at the higher choir level. The converging aisles make the front pews short with the longest beside the doors at the back. (B Lewis, Sunday at Kooyong Road, 1976, p 35)*

The Methodists/Presbyterians favoured centralised plan churches to allow for an octagonal internal space which was favourable to preaching.

In the course of the residential conversion, a number of gablets were added above the eaves line. All are in a half-timbered form (though glazed) which is confusing as this sort of detail was seen on residential buildings at the turn of the century. There is also a new 'half-timbered' entrance porch at the rear of the church and new rectangular openings (windows and doors) on this elevation. The central windows of the front gable and transepts have been infilled with brick. New brick fencing with cement dressings continue the palette of the original church, but again a modern lych gate creates some confusion as to what is original at the site. On the whole, however, these alterations are not visually imposing when viewed from the public domain.

## *Sunday School*

The 1891 Sunday School (the original church) is a smaller red brick building with cement dressings and polychrome brick accents. It has a transverse gable roof and a single-storey porch at the north end. The roof is covered in slates with three gabled metal ventilators on each slope. The parapeted gable end visible from the laneway is decorated in a polychrome diaper pattern, and the round-arched openings have red and cream stripes reminiscent of voussoirs. The windows and doorways have label moulds.

While the round-headed openings suggest a Romanesque influence, buttressing between window bays refers to the Gothic.

This building has also been altered in the residential conversion. A two-storey gable-fronted addition was built on the south end of the former Sunday School, and some openings have been partially infilled or new walls set back behind them. The most intrusive alteration is the addition of a 'half-timbered' projecting bay and balcony above the north-end entrance porch. Again, the insertion of a historicising domestic element into the Sunday School is confusing. Windows on the rear elevation are more extensively altered and enlarged to accommodate French doors, though the round-headed arch has been retained. Gablets were also inserted along the eaves line of this elevation.

## Comparative Analysis

The former Armadale Methodist (Presbyterian) Church is important for its Greek cross plan and for the skilful massing of

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minor elements to the facade.

The Methodists put great emphasis on preaching, and favoured amphitheatre-type church interiors. This led to the popularity of Greek cross and polygonal-plan churches built in the 1910s and 1920s in Victoria. Greek cross examples include Wesley Uniting Church of 1926 at 2-6 Oxford Street, Box Hill (Whitehorse City HO77), and the Hampton Uniting (Methodist) Church of 1928 at 17 Service Street, Hampton (Bayside City HO578).

In comparison, the Armadale Methodist Church of 1902 numbers among the pioneering example of this church type. It was preceded by the Greek cross-plan Kew Uniting (Presbyterian) Church of the 1880s at 75A Cotham Road, Kew (in HO150, Boroondara City), and the Romanesque Hawthorn Presbyterian Church of 1892, which is polygonal in plan, at 580 Glenferrie Road (Boroondara City HO48, VHR H2034).(1) It appears to be the earliest church of this type in the City of Stonnington.

## REFERENCE:

(1) Hermes No 3330, Kew Uniting Church, accessed 28/09/10.

## Statement of Significance

### *What is significant?*

The former St Andrew's Presbyterian (Methodist) Church of 1902 and the 1891 Sunday School (and original church) at 69 Denbigh Road, Armadale, to the extent of their original fabric.

The elements introduced as part of the residential conversion, including the brick fence and lych gate, are not significant.

### *How is it significant?*

The former Church and Sunday School are of local historical and architectural significance to the City of Stonnington.

### *Why is it significant?*

Historically, as an iconic example of local Presbyterian culture with a large, lively and influential Sunday School at the rear. (Criterion A)

Architecturally, the church of 1902 is an expertly massed design by prominent architectural practice Sydney Smith & Ogg. The Greek cross plan of the church reflects the Methodist emphasis on preaching, and is an early example of this type of building. (Criterion D)

## Recommendations 2010

### External Paint Controls

No
No
No
Yes Sunday School Hall
No
None specified
No

### Internal Alteration Controls

### Tree Controls

### Fences & Outbuildings

### Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

### Incorporated Plan

### Aboriginal Heritage Place