

Ceres Heritage Citations Project 2017**PLACE NAME:** Former Wesleyan Church

Place No. CER05

ADDRESS: 17 McCann Street, Ceres

Assessment Date: May 2017 (updated Sept 2018)

Historic Themes:**Early Settlement:** Agriculture**Townships:** Ceres**Community Life:** Churches**Condition:** Fair**Integrity:** Moderate**Photograph Date:** December 2016**CURRENT HERITAGE STATUS ON STATUTORY REGISTERS****Victorian Heritage Register:**

No

Victorian Heritage Inventory:

No

Local Planning Scheme:

Yes – HO66 (northern portion of site only)

CURRENT HERITAGE STATUS ON OTHER REGISTERS:**National Trust (Victoria) Register:**

No

RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Local Significance

RECOMMENDATIONS:Recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register: **No**Recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Inventory: **No**Recommended for inclusion as a Heritage Overlay in the Planning Scheme: **Yes****Schedule to the Heritage Overlay**

External Paint Controls Should Apply?

Yes – former Church building only.

Internal Alteration Controls Should Apply?

No

Tree Controls Should Apply?

No

Fences &/or Outbuildings of Note?

No

Prohibited Uses May be Permitted?

No

Incorporated Document

No

Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the existing internal alteration controls as part of HO66 are deleted given that the fittings and fixtures have been removed from the former church interior.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is Significant?

The former Ceres Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, has significance as a tangible legacy of the life and witness of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the village of Ceres from 1855 until 2016, and as a denominational school from 1855 until 1875. Built in 1855, the former Wesleyan Church building is the only intact surviving 1850s church building as part of the Geelong Wesleyan Circuit, and a rare surviving rural example of its type in the Geelong region.

The significant fabric of the former Wesleyan Church includes the gabled roof forms, Barrabool stone wall construction, slate roof cladding, square-headed timber framed twelve paned double hung windows (the windows at the west end being lower, reflecting the original lower ceiling internally to allow for a mezzanine), dressed stone quoinwork, stone tablets in the gable ends, four panelled timber entrance door and the dressed stone window sills.

How is it significant?

The former Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, Ceres, is historically, aesthetically, scientifically and socially significant at a LOCAL level.

Why is it significant?

The former Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, has historical significance for its enduring associations as a rare surviving example with the Wesleyan movement, from the earliest days of the development of the village of Ceres in the 1850s, to the evolution and development of the Methodist Church throughout the 20th century, and as part of the life and witness of the Uniting Church from 1977 until 2016 (Criteria A & B). The former Wesleyan Church was built in 1855 as part of the Geelong Circuit to service the locally notable number of Wesleyans, most of whom were also part of the Temperance Movement. In particular, the church has associations with Nicholas McCann, inaugural Church Trustee and significant benefactor who helped finance the construction of the Church building and provide the local Barrabool stone (Criterion H). The former Wesleyan Church also has associations with other notable figures in its early evolution, including the Rev. Isaac Harding, Wesleyan Minister responsible for the building of a number of Wesleyan chapels in the Geelong Circuit, inaugural Trustee and first Minister responsible for providing pastoral care to the Wesleyans at Ceres; other original Trustees including Ezra Firth, quarryman, Peter McCann, quarryman, and Joseph Armitage, farmer; A.M. Hope, original architect (Criterion H).

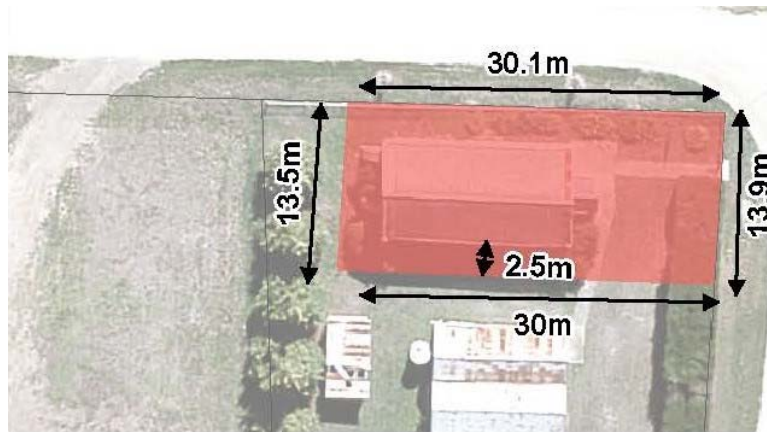
The former Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, has aesthetic significance as rare, intact, representative example of its type (Criterion D). The Wesleyan philosophy of 'earnest piety and dislike of frivolity' is embodied in the surviving physical building fabric. The vernacular Victorian Georgian church reflects non-conformist meeting house design ideology, typical in mid 19th century Victoria in its modest scale and unpretentious character. This building is the only intact surviving example of the 1850s of the Wesleyan Church in Geelong, as part of the Geelong Circuit.

The former Wesleyan Church building, 17 McCann Street, has scientific significance for its distinctive Barrabool stonework that was quarried nearby the church site, and while ubiquitous for building construction throughout Victoria (and especially the Barrabool Hills) in the 19th century, is now a material no longer employed (Criterion F).

The former Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, while no longer functioning for its original church purpose, has social significance as a physical legacy of its enduring role in the Wesleyan Methodist (and later Uniting Church) faith and faith education at Ceres from 1855 until 2016 (Criterion G).

Heritage Overlay Map

Following the demolition of the former Sunday School, the Planning Panel for Amendment C359 to the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme recommended the retention of the current extent of HO66 to include the former church building only. The Greater Geelong Council resolved that the extent of the heritage overlay reflect that shown in the following aerial image, taking in the north-west portion of the site only.



Source of image: City of Greater Geelong 2017, showing the heritage overlay confined to the north-west portion of the former Wesleyan Church site.

DESCRIPTION:

The former Wesleyan Church, 17 McCann Street, is set on an almost square site on the original subdivision of the Ceres village. It is situated on the south-west corner of Wheatsheaf and McCann Streets. The site is bound on the north, south and east sides by introduced hollow steel and rail, and cyclone mesh fences and timber corner posts (to a height of approximately 1200 mm, the north-west corner also having a timber post). On the west boundary is a row of semi-mature Cypress trees while on the front (east) boundary is a mature and manicured Cypress hedge, planted after the 1930s. The landscaping for the remainder of the site is largely open grassed spaces with some perimeter agapanthus on the north side, shrubbery to the south of the church and concrete pedestrian paths. Near the western boundary is an introduced, corrugated sheet metal outbuilding.

The former Victorian vernacular Georgian styled Wesleyan Church building is located in the northern portion of the site. It is characterised by a principal gabled roof form and a minor gabled entrance porch on the east side. These roofs are clad in slate with introduced timber bargeboards and flashings in the gable ends. The front porch has been rebuilt. The four-bayed church is also defined by square-headed timber framed twelve paned double hung windows (the windows at the west end being lower, reflecting the original lower ceiling internally to allow for a mezzanine). The building expresses the original Wesleyan ideal of a simple church building, the only elaboration being identified in the dressed quoinwork at the building corners and front window openings, stone label moulds above the front (east) windows and the tablets in the gable end, the tablet in the porch gable reading "Wesleyan Church 1855". Other early features include the four panelled timber entrance door and the dressed stone window sills. At the rear are introduced, projecting stone buttresses. The original window opening in the west gable end has been bricked up. There is metal bracing surrounding the rear (west) window on the north elevation and other metal brackets are visible on the north and south elevations.

Internally, the church has an early coved timber lined ceiling. There are hard plaster walls and introduced timber clad dados. The polished timber floor boards appear to be original, as do the timber door architraves and four panelled door between the main church space and vestry. The ceiling is punctuated by early iron tie rods.

Until recently, to the south of the church building was the former Sunday School. The timber weatherboard, Victorian Picturesque styled building had a double gabled roof form clad in corrugated sheet metal. The three bayed building was defined by square-headed timber framed, twelve paned double hung windows with moulded timber architraves and timber window sills. There were vertically boarded timber doors at the front (east) and another timber door at the rear (west, south side). The front gable ends were adorned with decorative timber bargeboards and timber finials.

Internally, the Sunday School building had strapped, timber-lined, coved ceilings supported by central posts. The northern portion of the interior had horizontal aligned timber wall cladding the south portion being clad in larger-sized horizontal timber boards. The timber floor boards also appear to be early. There was a timber partition wall at the west end, with a vertically boarded door providing access to a narrow kitchen area.



Photo 2: Former Church building, north & west elevations, 2016. Source: David Rowe.



Photo 3: Former Sunday School, east elevation, 2016, prior to demolition. Source: David Rowe.



Photo 4: Former Sunday School (middle ground) & Church (background), south elevations, 2016. Source: David Rowe.

Condition and Integrity

Church Building

Overall from the street, the church appears to be in fair condition. There is evidence of movement at the west end (particularly the north-west corner) in the wall cracks, rising damp in the wall bases, weathered timber window frames and sashes, and timber bargeboards, and rusted ridge capping and flashings. There is numerous evidence of previous mortar patching, some appearing to be cement rich. The church is of moderate integrity as a vernacular Victorian Georgian stone building. The most noticeable changes being the altered (rebuilt) front porch (reflecting its early design), introduced

buttresses at the west end and the timber bargeboards and flashing which appear to have replaced the original parapets and copings in the east and west gable ends.

HISTORY:**Early Settlement of the Barrabool Hills**

For at least 5,000 years, the Barrabool Hills was occupied by sections of the Wathaurong, a nomadic Indigenous tribe.¹ The Wathaurong's existence at Barrabool was to be dramatically changed with the arrival of John Batman and his exploration party in 1835. Arriving from Tasmania with the explicit intention of exploring the area, the eventually developed into the Port Phillip Association.² Establishing his headquarters in the vicinity of Indented Head, Batman explored the Bellarine Peninsula and Geelong region.³ One of Batman's party, John Helder Wedge, a surveyor, ventured further westward in exploring other parts of the region. He eventually followed the Barwon River from Fyansford along the foot of the 'Barrabool' Hills.⁴ There, 'he noted that the hills afforded "fine pastorage for sheep".⁵ From 1836, squatters arrived at Geelong to take up land for sheep grazing.⁶

By 1839, the Barrabool Hills had been surveyed as part of the Barrabool Parish.⁷ Large acreages were made available at a Government land sale in late 1839.⁸ In February 1840, much of the Barrabool Hills was acquired by Charles McLachlan, a wealthy Scottish businessman of Tasmania, and his business partner, Captain Charles Swanston, English banker and merchant of Tasmania and member of the Port Phillip Association⁹ who purchased Sections 2-3, 13-16, and 20-23 as his vast 4,480 acre Strathlachlan sheep estate.¹⁰ In 1850, Sections 22 and 23 and parts of Sections 13 and 14 of the Strathlachlan Estate (Barrabool Parish) were subdivided into 65 farms centred on a village of 45 building sites as the Merrawarp Estate.¹¹ By 1861, there were only 10 owner residents in the Estate, with four fifths still being tenant farmers.¹² At this time, the Barrabool Hills were considered to be the 'granary of the colony,'¹³ the location of sheep grazing and crop farms, and vineyards.

1 I. Wynd, *Barrabool: Land of the Magpie*, Barrabool Shire, Torquay, 1992, p.ix.

2 *Ibid.*, p.3.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*, p.5.

7 Barrabool Parish Plan, VPRS 16171, Public Record Office Victoria.

8 *Port Phillip Patriot and Melbourne Advertiser*, 9 December 1839, p.3.

9 D.S. Macmillan & J.R. Morris, 'McLachlan, Charles (1795-1855)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mclachlan-charles-2411/text3191>, published first in hardcopy, 1967, accessed online 20 January 2017 & C. Swanston, 'Swanston, Charles (1789-1850)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/swanston-charles-2713/text3815>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 20 January 2017.

10 Barrabool Parish Plan, op.cit. & Wynd, op.cit., p.43.

11 *Ibid.*, p.22.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Geelong Advertiser*, 14 September 1874, p.2.



Figure 1: Part Barrabool Parish Plan, Dept of Lands & Survey, Melbourne, March 1946, showing land sections in the Barrabool Hills, including Ceres. Source: VPRS 16171, Public Record Office Victoria

Another successful purchaser in February 1840 was William Robertson, Port Phillip Association member. He acquired Sections 5, 11 and 12.¹⁴ Two days after his purchase, Robertson sold Sections 11 and 12 to David Fisher, manager of the Derwent Company (successor to the Port Phillip Association). He named his estate 'Roslin' which he subdivided into farms that were leased to various tenants.¹⁵ In 1850, Fisher created the village of Ceres as a private subdivision of 58 allotments in part of Section 12 (Figure 2).¹⁶ The small settlement was soon to become the centre of the agricultural district where the neighbouring properties farmed crops, grazed sheep and established noteworthy vineyards.

¹⁴ Barrabool Parish Plan, op.cit.

¹⁵ Wynd, op.cit., p.208.

¹⁶ Fisher's Ceres Village Subdivision Plan, 1850, Maps & Plans collection 17/60, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre.

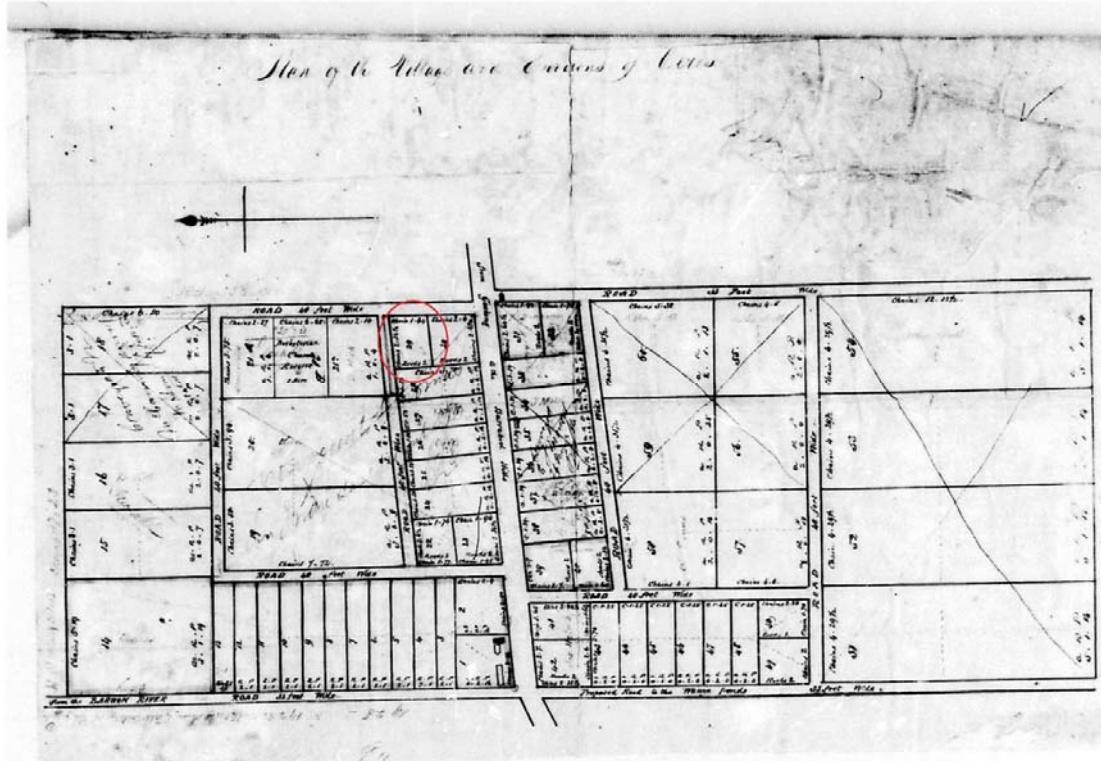


Figure 2: Fisher's subdivision plan of the Ceres Village, 1850. The circled allotment is the location of the former Wesleyan Church and Sunday School.

Source: Maps & Plans collection, 17/60, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre.

History of the Ceres Wesleyan Church and Sunday School

The Early Years

Although several successful vineyards were established in the Ceres area in the mid 19th century, a notable proportion of the newly-arrived farming community were Wesleyans. In the immediate ensuing years after the sale of the Ceres village subdivision, open air Wesleyan services were held at Ceres.¹⁷ Soon after, Ezra Firth hosted Wesleyan services in his stone cottage at 523 Barrabool Road.¹⁸ With Benjamin Holdsworth, Firth owned a nearby Barrabool stone quarry.¹⁹ Services were later held in premises owned by Nicholas McCann, another stonemason, builder and pioneer of the Ceres and the Barrabool Hills.²⁰

Meanwhile in the village of Ceres, Stephen Thomas, a tenant farmer of the neighbouring 'Roslin' Estate from the early 1840s, purchased village allotments 1-4, 19-21 (A-C) and 29 between 1850 and 1854.²¹ On allotment 1 he erected the Wheatsheaf Hotel and neighbouring blacksmith's shop, while on lot 21A a dwelling was built.²²

¹⁷ M. Frewin & L. Phelan, *Churches of Geelong and District: Pre-1900 Outer Geelong Region*, vol.2, Geelong Family History Group Inc., 2006.

¹⁸ Ibid. & M. Stainsby, Email seeking information on William Firth, 19 August 2004, Rootsweb at <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/AUS-VIC-GEELONG-DISTRICT/2004-08/1092890695>

¹⁹ *Geelong Advertiser*, 15 August 1910, p.3.

²⁰ Ibid., Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.* & M. Stainsby, 'Part 1 1853-1900' in M. Stainsby, J.A. Smith & J. Williams, *Steadfast Through Change: A History of the Wesleyan-Methodist-Uniting Church in Highton 1853 to 2006*, St. Luke's Uniting Church, Highton, 2008, p.60.

²¹ Land Application 419247, General Law Library, Laverton.

²² See heritage citation on 'Hurley House', 100 McCann Street, for further details.

The Building of the Church

By late 1854, Stephen Thomas had donated allotment 29 at Ceres to the new-formed Wesleyan Church.²³ While not a Wesleyan, Thomas' philanthropy may have been to offset his acquisition of allotment 21B that David Fisher had originally reserved for Presbyterian Church purposes.²⁴

A.M. Hope, architect of Wesley Chapel House, Little Ryrie Street, Geelong, prepared the design for a modestly scaled, vernacular Georgian preaching hall to be built of local Barrabool stone.²⁵ Hope called tenders for slating the proposed chapel on 12 December 1854, the total construction anticipated to cost £500.²⁶

Instrumental in the realisation of the new Church was the Rev. Isaac Harding, Wesleyan Minister, who was responsible for the building of numerous chapels and schools in the Geelong Wesleyan Circuit in the 1850s.²⁷ The local stonemason and quarry owner, Nicholas McCann, was also a key figure in the establishment of the Church, having donated the stone for its erection. He laid the foundation stone on 14 April 1855, being assisted by the Revs. Isaac Harding and Joseph Albiston (of Geelong), Theophilus Tayler (of Ballarat), D.I. Draper (Chairman of the Wesleyan District of Victoria), W.B. Boyce (President of the First Wesleyan Conference), and Sir Charles Hotham, Lieutenant Governor of Victoria.²⁸ The foundation stone ceremony was reported in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*:

On Friday last, April 14th, the foundation stone of the new Protestant Church and School of the Wesleyan denomination was laid at Ceres, on the a beautiful range of the Barrabool Hills, about four miles from town. The goodly company of people were gathered together on the occasion ... An ample tea was gratuitously provided by the ladies, and a list of subscriptions was read amounting to the sum of £250. We understand the building is to be of stone, and will be used as a school as well as a church. It will probably be completed and opened in the early part of July next.²⁹

It seems that the chapel had been completed by October 1855 as the Rev. Isaac Harding advertised that the Wesleyan School had been opened.³⁰ The completed gabled building was deliberately unpretentious, to reflect the 'earnest piety and dislike of frivolity' of the Wesleyan faith.³¹ The rough hewn Barrabool stone construction reflected several of the dwellings and other buildings built at Ceres and in the Barrabool Hills at the time. The chapel was characterised by a principal gabled, slate roof form, with a minor projecting and gabled entrance porch on the east side. It was lit by square-headed 12 paned timber framed double hung windows on the north and south elevations, with multi-paned windows on the front (east) elevation being surmounted by Tudor drip moulds. At the western ends of the north and south elevations were window openings of lower height, reflecting the internal configuration whereby the ground floor spaces – subdivided by an internal wall from the main chapel/school space - were surmounted by a mezzanine level. It appears that the western portion of the building was originally a

23 Stainsby, *op.cit.*, p.30. While the land was provided and the church was built in 1855, the conveyance of the land was not carried out until between 1857 and 1859. See Land Applications 104739 & 419247, *op.cit.*

24 Stainsby, *op.cit.*

25 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 12 December 1854, p.5. A.M. Hope, of Mt. Duneed, was the builder of a Wesleyan Chapel at Drysdale in 1863. See *Geelong Advertiser*, 4 April 1863.

26 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, *op.cit.* & 17 April 1855, p.2.

27 W.L. Blamire & J.S. Smith, *The Early Story of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria*, Wesleyan Book Depot, Melbourne, 1886.

28 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, *op.cit.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*, 13 October 1855, p.4.

31 R. Howe, 'The Wesleyan Church in Victoria, 1855-1901: Its Ministry and Membership', M.A., School of History, University of Melbourne, 1965, p.9.

teacher's residence, the mezzanine provided bedroom accommodation (Figure 3).³² Aside from the drip moulds to the windows on the front elevation, the only elaboration afforded the chapel was dressed quoinwork to the building corners and window and door openings, and the name plates attached to the main and porch gable ends on the east elevation (Figure 4).

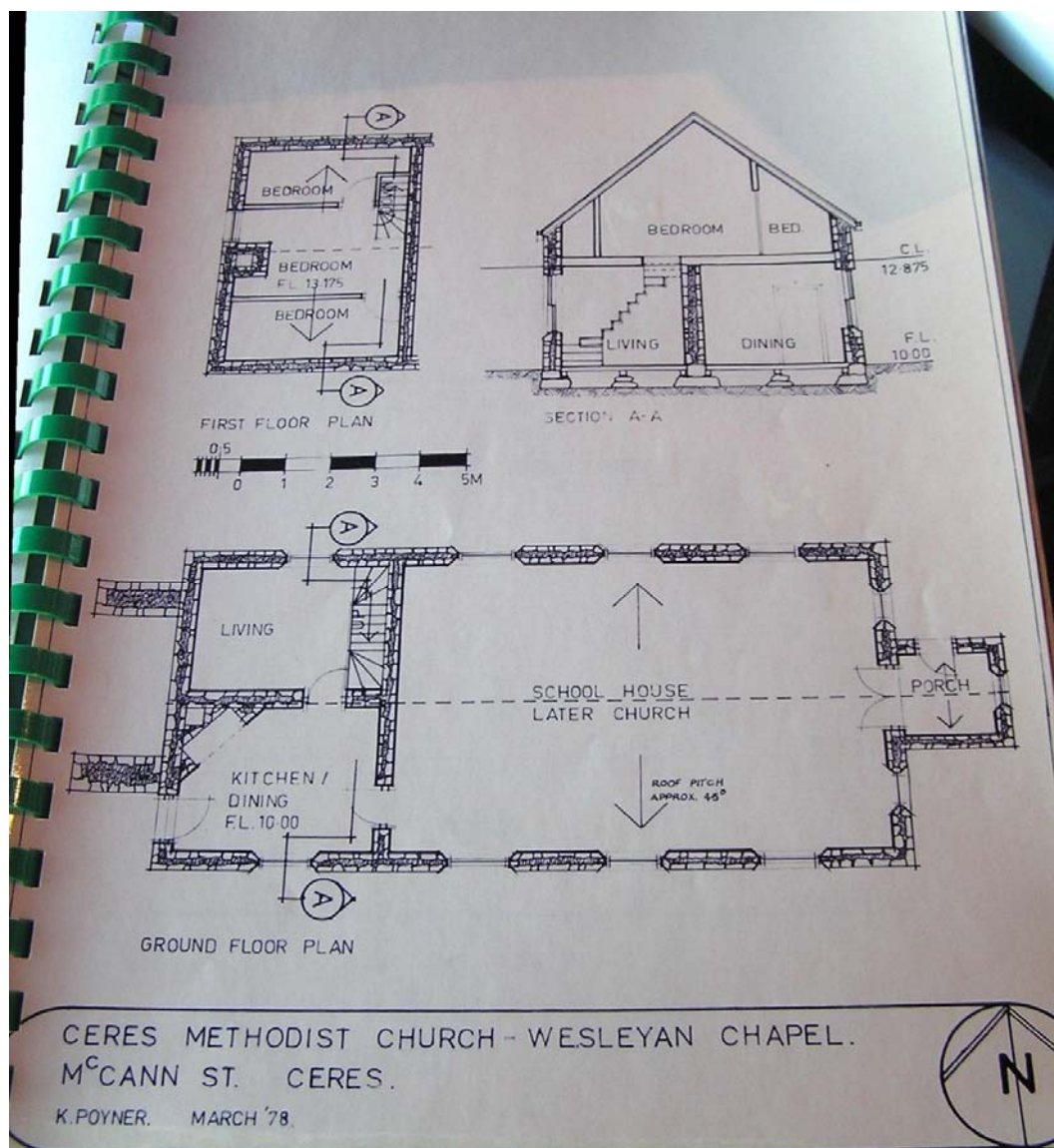


Figure 3: K. Poyner, Ground & Mezzanine Floor Plans & Section Drawing of the Ceres Church.

Source: 'Sandstone Buildings in the Parish of Barrabool Part A: The Public Building in and around Ceres', Research Report, School of Architecture, Deakin University 1978.

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This claim is made by K. Poyner, 'Sandstone Buildings in the Parish of Barrabool Part A: The Public Building in and around Ceres', Research Report, School of Architecture, Deakin University 1978, p.5, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre collection.

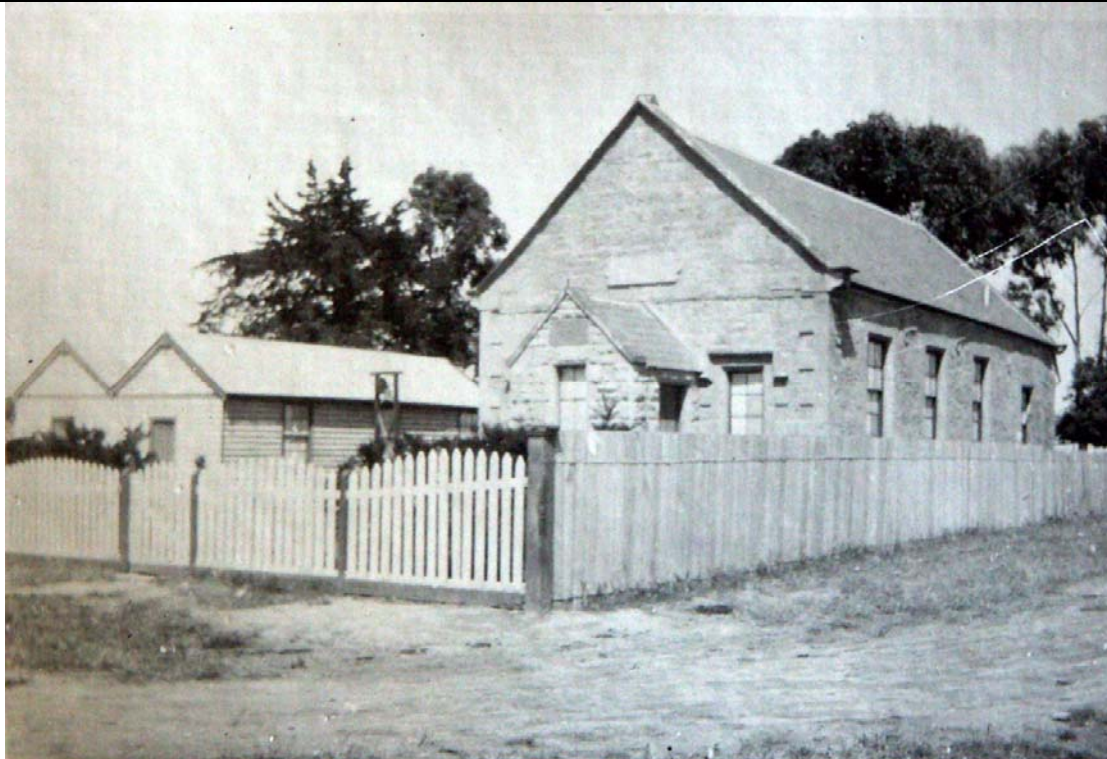


Figure 4: T. Holmes, Ceres Wesleyan Methodist Church and Sunday School, looking from intersection of McCann & Wheatsheaf Streets, c.1930. Source: T.T. Holmes photograph collection, c/o David Rowe.

It seems that the first marriage celebrated in the new Wesleyan Church occurred on 13 April 1856. Officiated by the Rev. Isaac Harding, George Miller of Ballarat married Miss Ann Norris McCann, third daughter of Nicholas McCann.³³

In addition to serving as a school and chapel, the Wesleyan Church was a meeting house in the early years. In 1857, a lecture was given by the Rev. Hill for establishing a literary association at Ceres, resulting in the formation of the Ceres Literary Association.³⁴

In 1861, it played host to a meeting held by the Barrabool Total Abstinence Society.³⁵ Total abstinence of alcohol formed part of nonconformist Wesleyan faith 'born of the fear that the immigrant would shed his temperate habits on arrival in the prosperous, golden colony.'³⁶ In the 1857, the *Wesleyan Chronicle and Victorian Miscellany Journal* published an article entitled 'A Word to New Comers' with the message:

... you can choose good companions and shun the bad; or you can refuse the good, and choose the evil. You can easily foster habits of intemperance and irreligion – or you can avoid the hotel, and repair to the House of God.³⁷

The building of a commodious stone Temperance Hall became a reality for the Abstinence Society in 1861, the foundation stone being laid in May of that year.³⁸

³³ *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 16 April 1856, p.3.

³⁴ *Wesleyan Chronical and Victorian Miscellany*, vol.1, no.3, September 1857, p.41, State Library of Victoria collection.

³⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 August 1861, p.2.

³⁶ Howe, op.cit., p.56.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Geelong Advertiser*, 13 May 1861, p.2.

The Inaugural Trustees

The Rev. Isaac Harding, Nicholas McCann, Peter McCann, Ezra Firth³⁹ and Joseph Armitage were appointed by the local Wesleyan Congregation to oversee and manage the interests of the Wesleyan faith at the new school and chapel. Brief biographies of the trustees are as follows:

Rev. Isaac Harding was born in 1815 at Wanstrowe, Somerset, England. He became a Wesleyan Methodist minister in 1836 and arrived in Australia in 1852. By 1854, Harding was a Minister of the Geelong Wesleyan Circuit, preaching at Wesley Church, Yarra, Street, as well as at Noble Street, Newtown, Kildare (Geelong West) and in 1855, at the opening of the chapel at Drysdale.⁴⁰ Harding resided in a contextually substantial 8 roomed brick dwelling in Yarra Street, South Geelong.⁴¹ In 1857, he secured an imported timber building from England which he used to establish the Shenton Methodist Church.⁴² A year later, Harding went to New Zealand before migrating to Queensland in 1868 where he ministered for many years. On his death in 1897, he was regarded as the oldest minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Australasia.⁴³

Nicholas McCann was born in 1803 in New South Wales, the son of Peter and Mary McCann.⁴⁴ He married Miss Catherine Johnson in 1826 when McCann was a stonemason at Parramatta.⁴⁵ With his wife and two sons, Charles and Peter, Nicholas McCann relocated to Georgetown where Catherine McCann died in 1831. At Campbell Town, Tasmania in 1836, McCann married Catherine Nelson.⁴⁶ Soon after, McCann heard glowing reports of the grazing potential in Victoria and in 1837 the family sailed to Westernport and then to Port Fairy.⁴⁷ There, he became involved in the whaling and building industries. In 1840, he travelled from Victoria in search of grazing land. Arriving in Geelong in 1841, he selected and settled at 'Glencairn, Ceres, in 1851.⁴⁸ He became a builder, stonemason and quarry developer, his quarry being the source of Barrabool stone used in the construction of several early buildings in Ceres and Geelong, and soon after, in other parts of Victoria.⁴⁹ McCann gave generously to the Wesleyan cause in the establishment of the Wesleyan church and to the Barrabool Hills Total Abstinence Society, donating the land for its hall in 1861.⁵⁰ He died at Ceres in 1879.⁵¹

39 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 17 April 1855, p.2, listed a William Firth as Trustee, and not Ezra Firth. A William Firth was born in c.1834 to Joseph and Nellie (nee Walker) Firth. William Firth was a stonemason but no record has been found of him at Ceres in the 1850s. He died at South Melbourne in 1888 – see Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes online. No family connection has been made between William and Ezra Firth. However, it is clear that Ezra Firth was an inaugural Trustee as his name was listed with the other Trustees in the conveyance of the land for the church. See Land Application 104739, op.cit.

40 *Brisbane Courier*, 19 July 1897, p.4 & Frewin & Phelan, op.cit.

41 Geelong Town Council Rate Book, 1855, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre collection.

42 Frewin & Phelan, op.cit.

43 *Brisbane Courier*, op.cit.

44 N.S.W. Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, Dept. of Justice & Attorney General, N.S.W., online.

45 Nicholas McCann, Ancestry online at http://www.ancestry.com.au/genealogy/records/nicholas-mccann_72070826

46 J. McNeill, *A Journey to Destiny 1890-1990: 100 Years of Cement Manufacturing at Fyansford by Australian Cement Limited*, Australian Cement Limited, Melbourne, 1990, p. 88.

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 W.R. Brownhill & I. Wynd, *History of Geelong and Corio Bay With Postscript 1955-1900*, postscript edn., The Geelong Advertiser, Geelong, 1990, p.408.

50 *Geelong Advertiser*, 6 April 1912, p.7.

51 *Ibid.*, 3 December 1879, p.2.

Peter McCann was the second son of Nicholas and Catherine McCann. He was born in 1828 at Parramatta, New South Wales.⁵² He went with his father to Port Fairy, helped him in the whaling and building business before becoming a partner in his father's business.⁵³ In 1850, Peter McCann travelled to England to bring back his sister, Ann, who, following the death of Catherine McCann, had been adopted to a couple in Launceston who relocated to England. There, McCann married Miss Elizabeth Begley. From 1852, McCann was actively involved in sandstone quarrying at Ceres and from 1880 with limestone extraction at Waurin Ponds.⁵⁴ At Batesford, he quarried limestone and in 1888 he purchased an additional property there which was to become the quarry of Australian Cement Limited. He initiated the cement works at Fyansford in 1890 and was the chairman of the first board of directors of Australian Portland Cement Co. Ltd.⁵⁵ In addition to his business pursuits, Peter McCann was a member of the Ceres Roads Board and a justice of the peace. He died in 1908.⁵⁶

Ezra Firth was born at Bradford, Yorkshire, England, in 1823, the son of John and Sarah Firth.⁵⁷ He married Miss Eliza Craggs in 1842.⁵⁸ A stonemason, Firth emigrated to Victoria on the *Larpen* in 1849, and first worked for a Mr Armytage on a property 50 kilometres from Geelong.⁵⁹ With the discovery of gold at Ballarat in 1851, Firth tried his luck at the diggings and within two months he had collected over 250 ounces of gold. To gain a better price, he took the gold to England, working as a seaman for the journey.⁶⁰ He returned to Victoria in 1852 and settled at Ceres where he established a freestone quarry with Benjamin Holdsworth.⁶¹ Stone from their quarry was used to build several substantial structures in Geelong and Melbourne, including the Town Hall, Customs House and old Supreme Court buildings in Geelong.⁶² In January 1864, Frith advertised a clearing sale of household furniture and effects on account of him and his family leaving for Queensland.⁶³ There, he established the Mount Surprise sheep station in the far north of the state, initially in partnership with James Atkinson.⁶⁴ Retiring from the station in 1884, Ezra and Eliza Firth travelled to England before settling in Brisbane where Ezra Firth died in 1910.⁶⁵

Joseph Armitage was another inaugural Trustee of the Wesleyan Church at Ceres. Little is known of him. He may have been born in London in 1799,⁶⁶ and as stonemason, he settled at Ceres with Addison Lamb and Thomas Nelson, quarryman of the Barrabool Hills.⁶⁷ In 1858, his address was the general store.⁶⁸ In

52 P. McKay, 'McCann, Peter (1828-1908)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mccann-peter-7303/text12669>, published first in hardcopy 1986, accessed online 3 February 2017.

53 *Ibid.*

54 McNeill, *op.cit.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 McKay, *op.cit.*

57 *Brisbane Courier*, 22 January 1910, p.13.

58 *Jillong Pocket magazine*, no.2, December 2013, pp.5-7.

59 *Ibid.*

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Ibid.* & *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 26 December 1854, p.6.

62 *Jillong*, *op.cit.*

63 *Geelong Advertiser*, 26 January 1864, p.3.

64 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 July 1908, p.12 &

<http://www.chapelhill.homeip.net/FamilyHistory/Other/QueenslandHistory/HistoryoftheAthertonTableland.htm>

65 *Jillong*, *op.cit.*

66 The Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes online, lists a Joseph Firth passing away in Victoria in 1859, aged 60.

67 *Ibid.* & *The Argus*, 12 April 1859, p.3.

68 *Geelong Advertiser*, 19 May 1858.

1859, his partnership with Lamb and Nelson was dissolved.⁶⁹ Armitage may have died later that year, aged 60.⁷⁰

By the time the Wesleyan Church land had been formally registered in 1859, Joseph Armitage had been replaced as Trustee by John Lowe and Edwin Wood. Some details of these later Trustees are as follows:

John Lowe was born on 27 August 1813 at Wymbunbury, Cheshire, England, to Joseph and Mary Jane Lowe (nee Barnett).⁷¹ A butcher, he first emigrated to New South Wales where he worked at Parramatta. From the early 1850s he relocated to Geelong where he opened a butcher shop in Moorabool Street. In c.1857 he formed a partnership of a Mr McKenzie known as Lowe and McKenzie. A Protectionist, Lowe was a lay preacher and briefly a Geelong Town Councillor. He was married to Ellen Lowe (nee Thomas). In 1864, he was elected a Member of the Legislative Council of Victoria, holding his seat until 1 January 1867. He died 16 days later on 17 January 1867.

Edwin Wood (1819-1900) of Denby Dale, Yorkshire, England, was a house and commission agent at the corner of Ryrie and Moorabool Streets, Geelong, in 1851.⁷² He arrived in Victoria after his marriage to Miss Harriott Bramley in 1844.⁷³ Throughout the 1850s he was involved with the Wesleyan Church and in 1856 he donated to the Geelong Wesleyan Home Missions.⁷⁴ By 1862 he had become insolvent and he subsequently relocated to Birregurra, where he became a member of the Birregurra Common School Committee, storekeeper and mail contractor.⁷⁵

In addition to the first Trustees, other members of the congregation were influential in its early spiritual progress. They included Robert McDowall (1838-1911). He arrived at Victoria in 1857 and went to Ceres where he first commenced a carting business to Ballarat.⁷⁶ McDowall also became postmaster at this time, a position he held with a storekeeping business until 1877 (and again from 1882, having relocated to Rochester in the intervening years).⁷⁷ He was also 'an acceptable Methodist preacher, travelling from Ceres to Mt. Duneed and Freshwater Creek.'⁷⁸

The Denominational and Sabbath Schools

In addition to being a place of worship, the Wesleyan chapel was built as a Wesleyan Denominational School. Education was administered in Victoria under a dual board system, whereby denominational schools received grants from the state by a denominational school board, while the secular schools were administered by a national schools board.⁷⁹ On 1 October 1855, the Wesleyan School at Ceres was

69 *The Argus*, op.cit.

70 Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes, op.cit.

71 All biographical information for John Lowe has been taken from Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes, op.cit., *Geelong Advertiser*, 21 January 1867, p.3 & 'Re-Member (Former Members)', Parliament of Victoria online at <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/re-member/details/524-john-lowe>

72 Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes, op.cit., *Port Phillip Directory*, 1851, & J. Dworak, 'Edwin Wood (1819-1900)', Wikitree online at <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Wood-12436>

73 Ibid.

74 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 13 June 1856, p.4.

75 Insolvency papers, 7 July 1862, VPRS 815 Unit 46, file 1203, Public Record Office Victoria, *The Age*, 3 September 1864, Winchelsea Shire Rate Books 1864, Geelong Library & Heritage Centre collection, J. Waghorn, *Index: Mail Contractors of Victoria 1838-1901*, J.F. Waghorn, 1988, J.F. Waghorn, *Index: Deputy Registrars of Victoria 1838-1901*, F.J. Waghorn, 1991 & W.L. Koenig, *The History of the Winchelsea Shire*, Henwood & Dancey, Geelong, 1933.

76 *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 May 1911, p.5.

77 See Ceres Post Office history at <http://www.stampboards.com/viewtopic.php?f=13&t=16494&start=250>

78 *Geelong Advertiser*, op.cit. Robert McDowall's family also made an important contribution to the life of the Wesleyan Church at Ceres until 1927. See *Geelong Advertiser* 15 November 1927, p.7.

79 Howe, op.cit., p.59.

opened. Seeking pupils, the Rev. Isaac Harding advertised the school in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*:

The Wesleyan School at Ceres, near the Wheat sheaf inn, Barrabool Hills, is now open for the reception of children under the charge of Mr and Mrs [L.B.] Stairs [sic.], Mission House.⁸⁰

Within six months, the School boasted 50 students, with positive results from the teaching of Mr Stair. In April 1856, an examination of the school was reported as follows:

An examination of this school, taught by Mr Stairs [sic.], took place on the 8th inst. In the presence of the Rev. Mr Harding and a number of the pupils' parents. Amongst the visitors, in addition to the parents, were observed Mr Stephen Thomas of the Wheat Sheaf, Mr Roche of the Rising Sun, Messrs. Firth, Meriesson, McCann and many others whose names did not transpire.

To the last named gentlemen (Mr McCann) the public are indebted for the erection of the building, as it has been mainly through his exertions (and from his purse in the first place) the village enjoys the advantages of so handsome a structure.

The pupils numbered about fifty, and their respectable attire and orderly behaviour reflected great credit on their parents and preceptor. The examination was conducted throughout by Mr Stairs in a masterly manner, under the inspection and suggestions of Mr Harding, and the proficiency of the children in their respective stages elicited the warmest approval from all present ... It is however, right to mention that several [children], who five months ago knew not one letter, are now able both to read and write ample lessons.⁸¹

The first teacher, John Bethridge Stair, was born in Wilshire, England, in c.1815.⁸² He married Miss Emily Maria Rolls. Stair then became a Missionary and worked in the South Sea Islands for the London Missionary Society.⁸³ While in the Samoan Archipelago, he 'compiled copious memoranda of the fauna and flora, the mythology and the historical traditions of the Polynesians, on which he contributed papers of unique interest to learned societies.'⁸⁴ Due to the failing health of Emily Stair, they returned to England. J.B. Stair joined the Church of England and with Emily then emigrated to Victoria.⁸⁵ Following their tenure as teachers at the Ceres Denominational School in December 1855 (when they were given a farewell tea),⁸⁶ J.B. Stair became a reader under the Anglican Bishop, Charles Perry, at Steiglitz.⁸⁷ He was ordained as a Deacon in 1857 and served as a Vicar from 1861 at Broadmeadows, Woodlands, Keilor and St. Arnaud.⁸⁸ On his death in 1898, he was the oldest Anglican clergyman in the Ballarat diocese.⁸⁹

The headmaster from 1856 J.P.L. de Neise.⁹⁰ He remained at Ceres until late 1858 or early 1859, before travelling to Jaffna, Ceylon, where he died on 22 April 1859.⁹¹ After a brief period without a head teacher,

80 *Geelong Advertiser & Intelligencer*, 9 October 1855, p.4. The report has the teachers' names as Mr and Mrs Stair, but later articles refer to them as "Stairs".

81 *Ibid.*, 10 April 1856, p.2.

82 Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes, op.cit. & *Ballarat Star*, 21 July 1898, p.2.

83 *Ibid.*

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*

86 Wynd, op.cit., p.72.

87 *Ballarat Star*, op.cit.

88 *Ibid.*

89 *The Australasian*, 30 July 1898, p.5.

90 Wynd, op.cit.

91 *Ballarat Star*, 10 October 1859, p.2.

Obedia Brady was appointed (assisted by Alice Cooper and Jane Firth in 1860), and a Mr. Martell in 1861.⁹² Brady (c.1829-1888) arrived in Victoria from Galway, Ireland, in July 1859.⁹³ Later a Wesleyan Local Preacher, Brady took up land at Dromana where he died in 1888.⁹⁴

In 1862 the Common Schools Act was passed and the Wesleyan School became Common School No. 151 from 1863.⁹⁵ Less emphasis was given to the Wesleyan faith during school hours,⁹⁶ this being the domain of the Wesleyan Sabbath School on Sundays which formed in 1864.⁹⁷ In 1872, the Common School had an average attendance of 37 children, with 48 examined as part of the Common School of South Grant.⁹⁸ It was also in 1872 when the Education Act was passed and the school became a State School. The State School in the Wesleyan Church closed in 1875 when the new Ceres State School No. 1602 was built at 605 Barrabool Road.⁹⁹

Following the establishment of a Sunday School in 1864, it may have been at this time when a modest timber hall was built to the south of the Church, separating the place of Common School and Sabbath (Sunday) School.¹⁰⁰ In 1868, the Wesleyan Sunday School joined the roll of the Geelong Sabbath School Union.¹⁰¹ The importance of the Sabbath School was highlighted by the Education Act in 1872 as the act excluded religious teaching in State Schools.¹⁰² In 1882, the anniversary of the Ceres Wesleyan Church was celebrated with tea and public meetings involving approximately 200 people. The proceeds of the anniversary meetings were 'devoted to paying the expenses connected with the removal of the old Devon church¹⁰³ and its re-erection at the township of Ceres to provide further accommodation.'¹⁰⁴ The relocation of the former Devon Wesleyan Church was carried out by Josiah, Wesley and William Walter on the wagons of William Honey and Henry Clinnick.¹⁰⁵ This resulted in a double gabled timber building (Figure 4).

The Ceres Church and Sunday School in the 20th Century

The Ceres Wesleyan Church and Sunday School continued to progress throughout the late and early 20th centuries. The Church experienced a number of changes and events throughout these years. In 1914, repairs were made to the front porch (further repairs were made in 1922).¹⁰⁶ In September 1915 it celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with three special services the Temperance Hall.¹⁰⁷ A year later, the Church lost one of its congregation, Private Charles Henry Smith, in the First World War. He was killed in

92 Poyner, *op.cit.*, p.4.

93 Victorian Births, Deaths & Marriages Indexes, *op.cit.*, Unassisted British Passenger Index, July 1859, 'Royal Charter', Public Record Office Victoria, North Melbourne & C. Brady, Brady Genealogy Page online at <http://www.reap.org.nz/~chris/brady.html>

94 *Ibid.* & O. Brady, Probate Administration files, 1888, VPRS 28/P0 Unit 442 Public Record Office Victoria.

95 Wynd, *op.cit.*

96 Howe, *op.cit.*, p.75.

97 Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*

98 *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 July 1872, p.3.

99 See heritage citation for the Ceres Primary School for further details.

100 Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*, state that 'Church records reveal the existence of a Sunday School from 1864', which might suggest the building was constructed at this time.

101 *Geelong Advertiser*, 10 July 1868, p.2.

102 Howe, *op.cit.*

103 Wynd, *op.cit.*, p.69.

104 *Geelong Advertiser*, 2 November 1882, p.2.

105 Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*

106 *Ibid.*

107 *Geelong Advertiser*, 24 September 1915, p.5.

action at Fleurbaux, France, on 19 July 1916.¹⁰⁸ A memorial tablet was unveiled in the church in December 1919 (Figure 5).¹⁰⁹

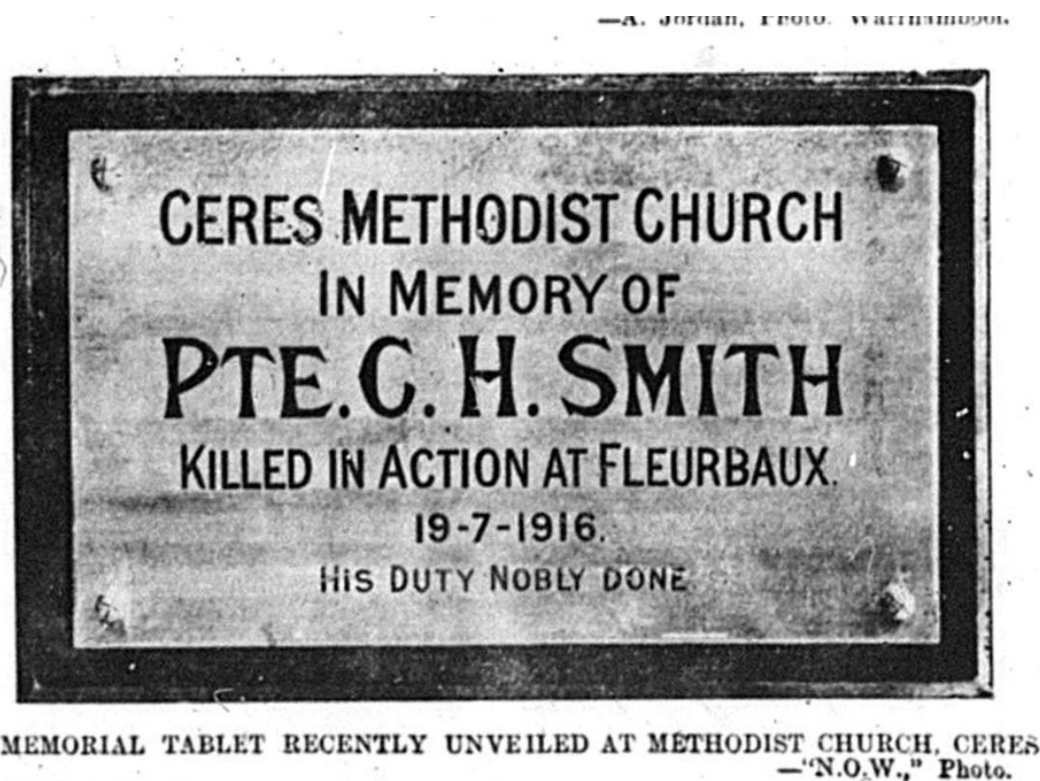


Figure 5: Detail of Memorial Tablet to Private C.H. Smith, Ceres Church, 1919.

Source: *News of the Week*, 25 December 1919.

In 1923, the congregation considered the possibility of constructing a new church building but this did not proceed.¹¹⁰ Between c.1930 and 1935, alterations were made to the principal gable ends, with changes to the projecting parapets and copings, and the removal of the corbels (Figure 6).¹¹¹ The earlier higher solid timber paling fence that lined the northern boundary was also replaced with a lower, visually-permeable timber picket fence.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 December 1919, p.5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*

¹¹¹ See Figures 4 and 6.



Figure 6: C. Fox, Ceres Methodist Church, 7 July 1935.

Source: La Trobe Picture collection, State Library of Victoria, accession no. H14967.

Thirty years later in 1953, further repairs and upgrades were made at a cost of £1,670, including the installation of a timber dado on the interior walls to hide the evidence of rising damp.¹¹² Electricity was supplied to the church buildings in 1955.¹¹³ By this time, stone buttresses had been constructed at the western end of the church building as shown in a plan of the church site (Figure 7). This plan also showed that the western spaces of the church building (presumably the former teacher's residence) had been converted into a vestry and ante room, and the mezzanine had been removed. This may have been carried out many years earlier following the disbanding of the State School in 1875.

¹¹² Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*, & Poyner, *op.cit.*, p.5.

¹¹³ See 'Methodist Church and Hall, Ceres,' Public Building file, VPRS 7882/P2 Unit 1172 Public Record Office Victoria, North Melbourne.

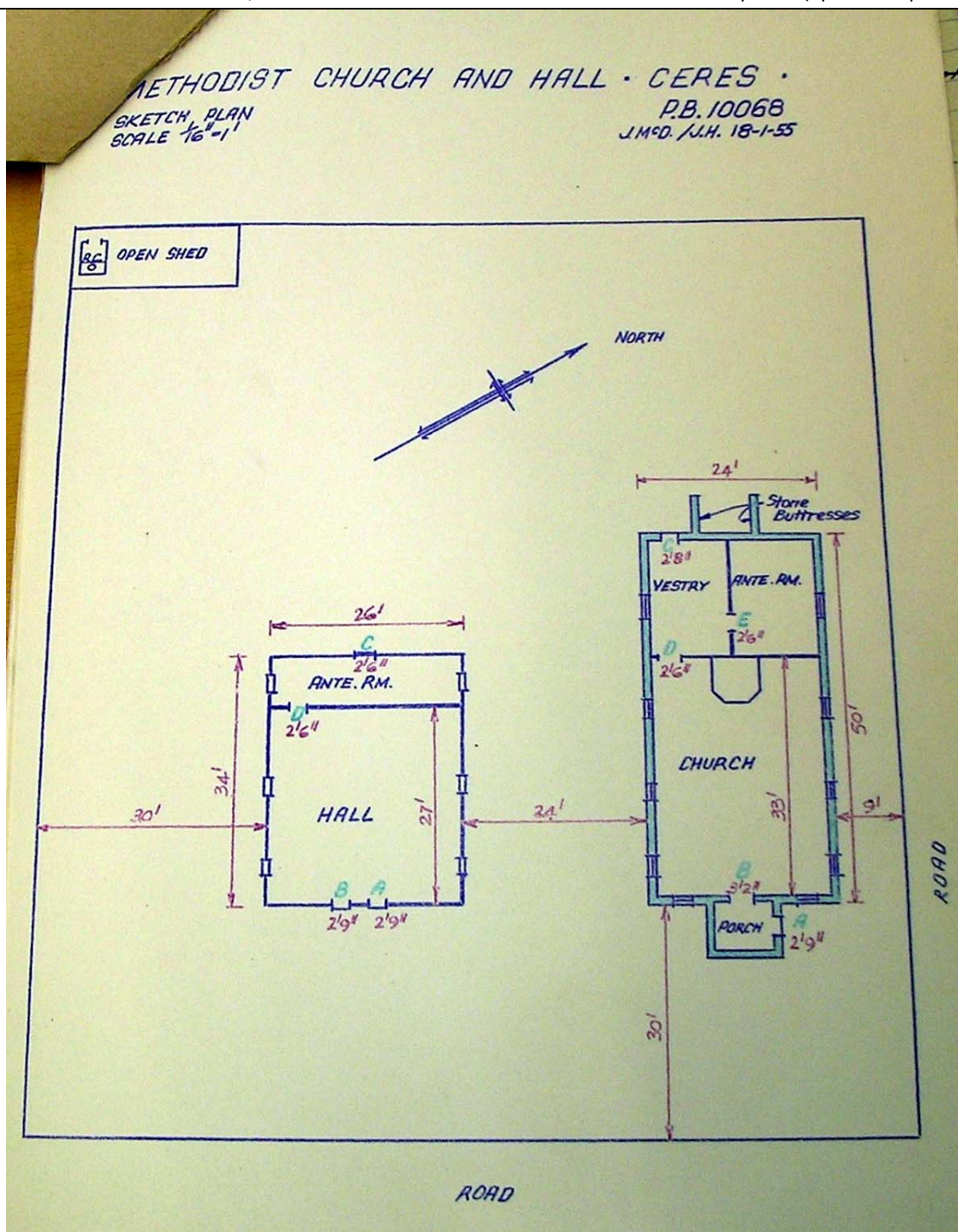


Figure 7: Sketch Site Plan of the Ceres Methodist Church, 18 January 1955.

Source: Public Building file, VPRS 7882/P2 Unit 1172 Public Record Office, North Melbourne.

A Period of Decline

In 1977, the Ceres Methodist Church became part of the Uniting Church of Australia. A year later on 17 March 1978, the Ceres and Barrabool congregations combined services, each church hosting worship on alternate Sundays.¹¹⁴ By 1979, the modest parapets had been capped and flashed, and timber

¹¹⁴ Frewin & Phelan, *op.cit.*

bargeboards added to the main gable ends of the church building. The timber picket fence, erected in the 1930s, had been replaced with hollow steel post and rail and cyclone mesh fencing. Between 1935 and 1969, rectangular metal bracing was added around the western window opening on the north elevation (Figure 8). A low hollow steel post and rail and cyclone mesh boundary fence had also replaced the earlier timber pickets.



Figure 8: J.T. Collins, Ceres Methodist Church, 9 February 1969.

Source: La Trobe Picture collection, State Library of Victoria, accession H94.200/630.

Following a substantially reduced congregation, the Ceres Uniting Church held its final service in December 2015.¹¹⁵ It subsequently closed and was sold in July 2016.¹¹⁶ Internal fittings and fixtures were removed by the Uniting Church following the sale (the interiors of the buildings were shown in photographs by Barry Plant Real Estate in 2016.¹¹⁷ The former Sunday School Hall was recently demolished.

COMPARATIVE

Other Wesleyan Methodist Churches of the 1850s in the former Geelong Circuit

The Wesleyan Church was established in the Port Phillip District in 1838 with William B. Boyce as General Superintendent.¹¹⁸ The Rev. Francis Tuckfield and the Rev. Benjamin Hurst were selected as missionaries to the Aboriginals in the district.¹¹⁹ On 28 July 1838, the Rev. Tuckfield preached the first Wesleyan

¹¹⁵ *Geelong Advertiser*, 1 August 2016.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Personal comment from Tufan Chakir, architect and planning consultant, to the author, December 2016. The interior photographs of 2016 may be viewed on the Barry Plant Real Estate website at <http://www.barryplant.com.au/property/538621/2a-17-mccann-street-ceres/> & <http://www.barryplant.com.au/property/538621/2a-17-mccann-street-ceres/>

¹¹⁸ W. Phillips, 'The Denominations' in M. Lewis (ed.), *Victorian Churches: Their origins, their story and their architecture*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne, 1991, p.8.

¹¹⁹ C.A. McCallam, 'Tuckfield, Francis (1908-1865)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *op.cit.*, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tuckfield-francis-2747/text3887>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 7 February 2017.

sermon in Geelong.¹²⁰ The Rev. Hurst followed in 1839. The first 'class' meetings were held by the Rev. James Smith in 1841.¹²¹

On 20 February 1842, the first Wesleyan Chapel and Schoolroom was opened on Wesleyan Church land in Yarra Street. This relocated two storey timber store became the centre of the Geelong Wesleyan Circuit.¹²² It was replaced with a more substantial and enduring gabled Barrabool stone church building in 1846.¹²³ Known as Wesley Church, 96 Yarra Street, Geelong, it is Victoria's oldest surviving Wesleyan Church, but it has been substantially altered and extended, including major additions in 1859, internal alterations in 1893 and throughout the 20th century, narthex and chapels at the eastern end in 1932 and later additions of the 20th century in the north-west corner.¹²⁴ Architecturally, the Wesley Church is not comparable to the considerably more modest vernacular Georgian chapel at Ceres, the only similarity being the Barrabool stone construction (the stone having been rendered in later years at Wesley). Historically, the Wesley Church was the centre of the Geelong Wesley Circuit. It has direct associations with the Ceres Church in the fledgling years of Wesleyan life and witness in the Geelong area.

By 1849, the Wesleyan Church had made steady progress at Port Phillip with a total membership of 500 people.¹²⁵ In 1850, a new District of the Church was created and the Rev. William Butters was appointed as Chairman.¹²⁶ Significant expansion of the Wesleyan cause came following the arrival of additional Ministers to Geelong in 1853. In particular, the Rev. Isaac Harding was claimed to have had 'an ardent appetite for Chapel building.'¹²⁷ This is especially highlighted in a letter by Harding on 1 June 1855:

At South Geelong, a brick Chapel has been erected and paid for at a cost of £1400. At Chilwell one has also been built at a cost of £2,200, with a debt of £850. A brick Chapel is also completed at Tuckfield [Drysdale] to a considerable degree through the liberality of Miss Newcombe. A stone Chapel is also in course of erection at Ceres, amidst the confields of the Barrabool Hills, which will cost £500, and at Highton a neta little brick Chapel was opened the other day. These, beside five other Chapels of wood, have been erected during the past year, while five Day schools have been established. So that the Geelong Circuit now comprises twelve places of worship and eight Day schools affording accommodation for 2,300 souls, and daily instruction given (gratiously when necessary) to 510 children, with at least an equal number of Sabbath schools, which are conducted with as much zeal and ability as similar institutions at home.¹²⁸

In addition to the Ceres church (and the former Devon Church now part of the Ceres Sunday School Hall), the only surviving building mentioned in Harding's letter built during around the time of the Ceres Church is at South Geelong. Built in 1853 with a frontage to Balliang Street, the original chapel was extended in 1861¹²⁹ and while altered, it is still extant.

The Ceres Wesleyan Church remained part of the Geelong Wesleyan Circuit until March 1871 when it was divided into two: the Yarra Street Circuit and the Geelong West Circuit.¹³⁰ Ceres fell within the Geelong

120 Blamire & Smith, *op.cit.*

121 *Ibid.*

122 *Ibid.*

123 Lewis, *op.cit.*, p.124.

124 *Ibid.*

125 Howe, *op.cit.*, p.1.

126 G. Butler & Associates, 'City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study: Significant Sites', prepared for the City of Greater Geelong, 1991-1995.

127 Blamire & Smith, *op.cit.*

128 *Ibid.*

129 Butler, et.al., *op.cit.*

130 Stainsby, *op.cit.*, p.83.

West Circuit.¹³¹ A Wesleyan Association Chapel had been built in Preston Street, Ashby (Geelong West), in 1855¹³² and it was followed by the opening of another chapel nearby in Wellington Street in 1858.¹³³ Known as the Ashby Methodist Chapel, a transept was added in 1868. This bluestone church was dismantled and rebuilt on a new site in Bostock Avenue, Manifold Heights, in 1939.¹³⁴ It was substantially damaged by a fire in 2015, with only the walls and some windows and doors surviving.¹³⁵

Overall, the former Ceres Church is the only intact surviving example of the 1850s of the Wesleyan Church in Geelong, as part of the Geelong Circuit. It is one of four surviving church buildings associated with the Circuit for this period, the others being Wesley, 96 Yarra Street, Geelong (more substantial given its city location but substantially altered from the original design), former chapel and Sunday School, South Geelong, and the Mosque (former Ashby Methodist Church), Bostock Avenue, Manifold Height (a larger building but of lower-order integrity given its relocation in 1939 and recent considerable fire damage). These other former Wesleyan Methodist Churches are included as heritage overlays in the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme.

Architecturally, the Ceres Church is not comparable to the original designs of Wesley Church, Yarra, Street, former chapel and Sunday School, South Geelong and the former Ashby Methodist Church, Manifold Heights, not only because of its considerably smaller scale but given its vernacular Victorian Georgian design. While the South Geelong chapel was designed in a restrained Victorian Tudor style, the Wesley Church and Ashby Methodist Church were distinctively Victorian Gothic. The Ceres Church reflected the attitudes and philosophies of Non-Conformist Church design of the early 19th century as represented by a preaching box or meeting house with a simple front porch and rudimentary detailing. This architectural approach was opposed by the Roman Catholic denomination who claimed it 'utterly unsuitable for Christian churches and a Christian society.'¹³⁶ It was not until the later 1850s when Victorian Gothic design became more accepted for Wesleyan Methodist Churches. In 1858 with the opening of Wesley Church, Melbourne, the Rev. Daniel Draper declared that 'I know that some of our friends are apprehensive that in the erection of these Gothic structures we are departing from the simplicity of original Methodism.'¹³⁷

The Ceres Church is the earliest of the two surviving mid 19th century rural Wesleyan Churches in the Geelong region. The other is at South Geelong, which includes the former chapel and Sunday School and a bluestone church built in 1869.¹³⁸ Like the Ceres Church, the South Geelong Church no longer functions for its original purpose.

Other Surviving Rural Churches of the 1850s in the Geelong Region

Within the Geelong region are a small number of surviving rural church buildings constructed in the 1850s. They include:

- Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 410 Merrawarp Road, Barrabool.¹³⁹ The Victorian Primitive Gothic styled Barrabool stone church was first constructed in 1855. It was rebuilt in 1884. There is a stone Victorian Picturesque Gothic styled vicarage and a vernacular styled former school room

¹³¹ See Baptismal Rolls, Ashby Wesleyan Circuit, Geelong Family History Group Inc.

¹³² *The Age*, 28 July 1855, p.5.

¹³³ D. Rowe & W. Jacobs, 'Ashby Heritage Review', vol. 1, prepared for the City of Greater Geelong, 2010, pp.2590260.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Having served in more recent times as a Mosque, the former church is anticipated to be rebuilt in 2017 to largely reflect its original appearance.

¹³⁶ R. Dixon & S. Muthesius, *Victorian Architecture*, 2nd edn., Thames & Hudson, London, 1988, pp.182-185.

¹³⁷ Howe, op.cit., p.9.

¹³⁸ Butler, et.al., op.cit.

¹³⁹ Lewis, op.cit., p.100 & Victorian Heritage Database online, February 2017.

that form a rare, cohesive group of Barrabool stone Anglican buildings, reflecting the religious, social and education role of the Church in mid 19th century Barrabool. While a more substantial church building than the Ceres church, the former Wesleyan Church at Ceres is more intact to its original 1850s design. The Holy Trinity Anglican Church complex is included on the Victorian Heritage Register.

- Former Bible Christian Siloam Chapel, 440 Considines Road, Modewarre.¹⁴⁰ Built in 1858, the rendered brick Victorian Georgian styled building is in poor condition and now a farm outbuilding. It is comparable in scale and design to the Ceres Church, although the Bible Christian chapel lacks a front porch (it has a notable round-arched central entrance doorway). Included as a heritage overlay in the Surf Coast Planning Scheme.
- St. Mark's Anglican Church, 715-729 Bellarine Highway, Leopold.¹⁴¹ This bluestone Early English Gothic styled building was constructed in 1859-62 to a design by the Geelong architect, Edward Prose. A red brick sanctuary was added in 1919 and a gabled bluestone entry porch in 1931. It is a more substantially-scaled church building than the Ceres church, and expresses the more common Gothic idiom of the late 1850s. St. Mark's is included on the Victorian Heritage Register.
- Former St. John's Roman Catholic Chapel, Pigdons Road, Waurin Ponds.¹⁴² Originally built in 1857 at Sutherlands Creek as a Roman Catholic chapel that served as a church and school, the Victorian Early English styled building was built of Maud quartzite. It was abandoned soon after 1950 and in 1986 it was dismantled and rebuilt at the Waurin Ponds campus of Deakin University. The gabled form and scale are comparable with the Ceres Church, but the latter is intact to its original site and of different design.

Overall, the Ceres Church is one of very few surviving rural examples on its original site built from the 1850s in the Geelong region.

140 D. Rowe & W. Jacobs, 'Surf Coast Shire Heritage Study Stage 2B', prepared for the Surf Coast Shire, 2007-08.

141 Victorian Heritage Database online, February 2017.

142 A. Willingham, *Geelong Region Historic Buildings & Objects Study*, Geelong Region Commission, Geelong, vol. 1, 1986 & D. Rowe & L. Huddle, 'Greater Geelong Outer Areas Heritage Study Stage 2', prepared for the City of Greater Geelong, 2000.