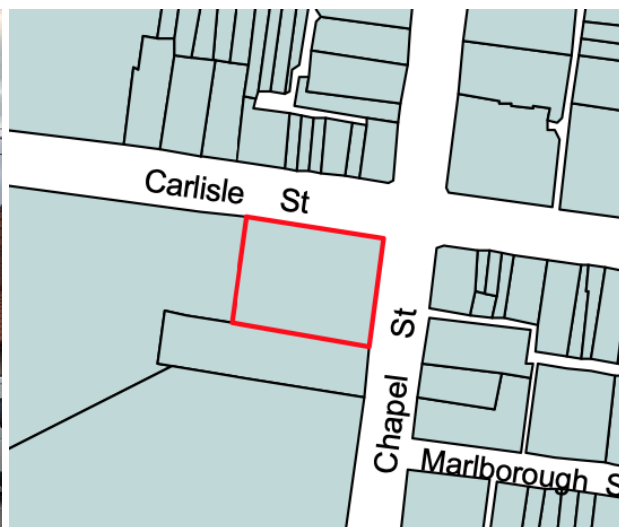


# City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

**Place name:** St Kilda Uniting Church and Hall  
**Other names:** Wesleyan Methodist Church and Hall

**Citation No:**  
**319**



**Address:** 101 Carlisle Street and 161-69 Chapel Street, St Kilda

**Heritage Precinct:** Carlisle Street Commercial & Public

**Category:** Religion: Church and Hall

**Heritage Overlay:** HO7

**Style:** Victorian: Gothic (Church)  
Interwar: Old English (Hall)

**Graded as:** Significant

**Constructed:** 1877, 1885 (Church), 1939 (Hall)

**Victorian Heritage Register:** No

**Designer:** Crouch & Wilson (Church),  
James H. Wardrop (Hall)

**Amendment:** TBA

**Comment:** Revised citation

## Significance

### What is significant?

The former Wesleyan Methodist Church complex, now the St Kilda Uniting Church, at 101 Carlisle Street and 161-169 Chapel Street, St Kilda is significant. Contributory elements are:

- The restrained Gothic Revival-style, polychromatic brick, church designed by Crouch & Wilson, built in two stages in 1877 and 1885. The original interior decoration, and the Fincham & Hobday organ installed in 1891 also contribute to the significance of the church.
- The brick church hall, designed in a finely detailed brickwork, of a domestic scale and character, designed by James H. Wardrop and built in 1939.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

### How is it significant?

The St Kilda Uniting Church complex, St Kilda is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### Why is it significant?

The church is of historical significance as an early, and important, church within St Kilda. It was the second Wesleyan Methodist church established in St Kilda, and is associated with the early settlement of St Kilda south and the development of the residential areas east of Brighton Road. It also forms part of an historically important cluster of civic and community buildings on the Market Reserve. (Criterion A)

The hall is of historic significance as an illustration of the spiritual, educational and social programs carried out by the church throughout its 140-year history. It demonstrates commitment of the congregation to social justice and caring for the vulnerable and marginalised within the community, which has its roots in Wesleyan Methodism. The use of the hall by Port Phillip Community Group since its inception in the 1970s is also of historical importance. (Criterion A)

The church is of aesthetic significance, as a fine example of a mid-late Victorian Gothic Revival brick church. The use of polychromatic brickwork is well executed, creating restrained application of patterns in the form of banding, quoining and stepped effects. The spire, is also of note for its distinct roof form and its construction, in part, in timber, which as a sum create an interesting variant and unusual example of a church spire in Port Phillip. (Criterion E)

The hall is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a brick church hall built in the inter-war period, well-detailed in its use of brick, in a variety of applications including banding, tapestry panels and soldier courses, that achieve a fine composition. This, combined with elements such as small entrance porches, gable roof forms clad in unglazed terracotta, give the building a residential scale and character that is an appropriate design response for a children's Sunday School hall. (Criterion E)

The former Wesleyan Methodist Church complex, in more recent times known as the St Kilda Uniting Church, is of social importance to the City of Port Phillip. Through its comfort and support to the community through religious and community activities, it is a place known, used and valued by residents of Port Phillip for over 140 years. (Criterion G)

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## Thematic context

### Victoria's framework of historical themes

8. Building community life: 8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

### Port Phillip thematic environmental history

8. Community life: 8.1 Spiritual life

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## History

### Contextual history

Methodism was introduced into Victoria by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1838, but like Presbyterianism it was soon represented by several divisions. For example, in St Kilda the Wesleyan Methodist congregation held its first services in 1853 and erected its first church in Fitzroy Street between 1857 and 1858. Soon afterwards in 1859, a church was erected in Pakington Street for the United Free Methodist Church, which had formed that year with the union of the Arminian Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodist Association. A second Wesleyan Methodist Church opened in Chapel Street in 1877 on part of the land reserved for the town hall.

These divisions of Methodism united to form the Methodist Church of Australia in 1902 and, in 1977, the Methodist Church became part of the Uniting Church in Australia (Lewis 1991:10).

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## St Kilda Uniting (former Wesleyan Methodist) Church complex

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Chapel Street, St Kilda was built in 1877. Crouch and Wilson were the architects, the cost was £1,060 and the church was opened on the 23rd of May 1877. The first section comprising the nave measured 45 feet (22.7 m) x 27 feet 8 inches (8.4 m). Crouch and Wilson also designed the transepts, chancel and vestries, which were added in 1885 at a cost of £1,700. A school was established in 1879, which was enlarged in 1887. In 1891 a two-manual organ of nine stops was installed by Fincham and Hobday at a cost of £235 (Bomford).

Thomas Crouch lived in St Kilda and was a long-time trustee of this church. He and his wife are commemorated in a 1950 stained-glass window (Bomford).

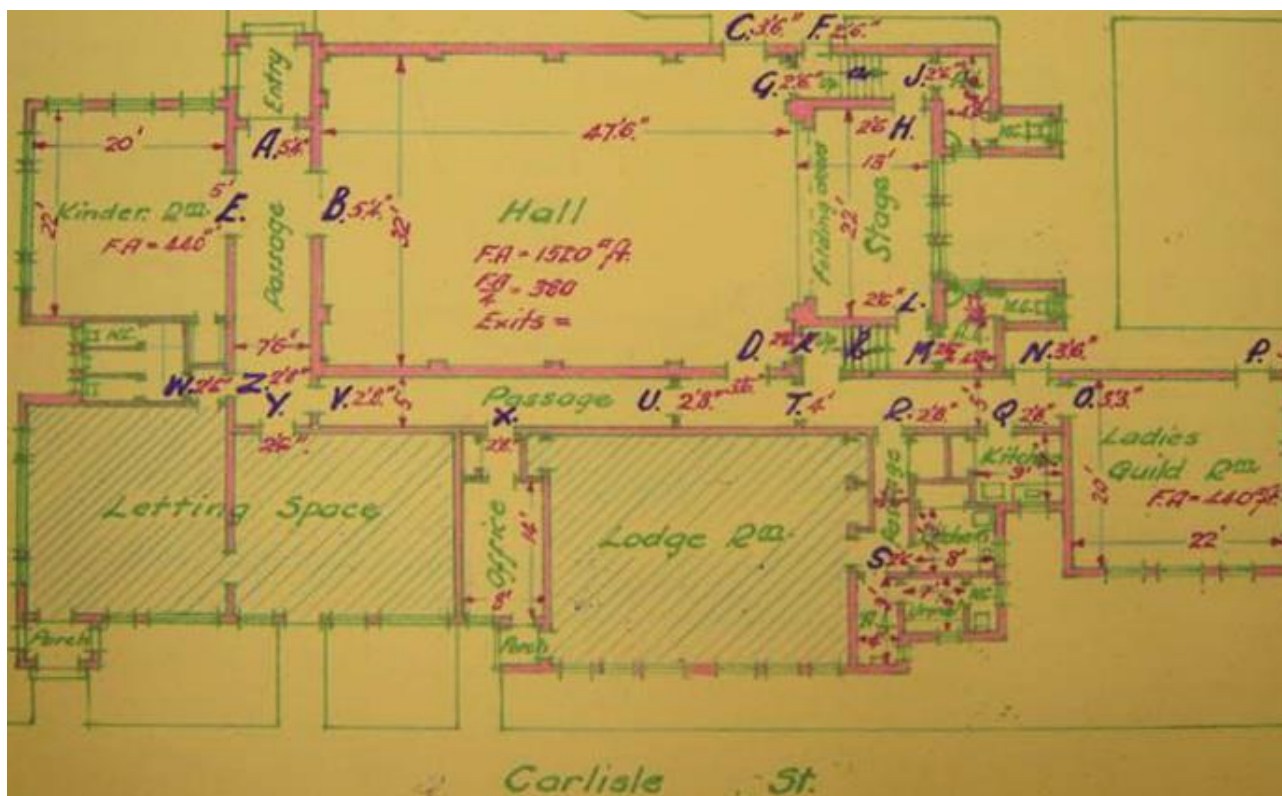
The site for the church had been set aside as early as 1859 and, as the surrounding area began to develop, the need for the church was identified in 1876 when the population in south St Kilda in the neighbourhood of the Balaclava Railway station was increasing rapidly. A public meeting to discuss the establishment of the church was held in July 1876 in the United Methodist Free Church in Pakington Street and, despite the opposition of some people living close to the St Kilda Wesleyan Church in Fitzroy Street (who feared the new church would be a drain on their church's finances) fundraising began soon afterward. The contract to build the church was signed on 22 December 1876 and the position of the building was marked out on Christmas Day (*The Argus*, 1 July 1876, p.6; Bomford).

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was one of four public or church buildings established on the triangle of land bounded by Carlisle Street, Chapel Street and Brighton Road and followed the opening of Holy Trinity Anglican Church (1871) Brighton Road Primary School (1874). The presence of these buildings perhaps influenced the decision of St Kilda Council to relocate the town hall and municipal chambers to the current site, opening in 1890.

In 1911, a brick Sunday School Hall containing a kindergarten and three classrooms was erected to the north of the church, facing Carlisle Street. Designed by architect Alec Eggleston, the hall was officially opened in February 1912. In 1939, this hall was replaced by a new building designed by noted architect James H. Wardrop. A.M. & R.R. Gyngell were the builders. The foundation stone was laid on 18 February 1939 by the Reverend H.G. Secomb, president of the Methodist conference held that year (BP, PROV).

The new building comprised a hall with stage at the west end and kindergarten room at the east end. On the north side of the hall there was a lodge room, ladies' guild room and kitchen and toilet facilities as well two rooms set aside for letting out.

The new Sunday School Hall enabled the church to fully serve the needs of the local community. Due to its location close to areas that were once considered the 'poorer' districts of St Kilda (the Balaclava flats), and its roots in Wesleyan Methodism, social welfare issues and concern for the marginalized have been prominent throughout the history of the congregation (St Kilda Uniting Church website). This is reflected in the current (2020) use by Uniting Care of the northern half of the building as a drop-in centre, while the southern half (containing the former kindergarten and hall) is occupied by the Port Phillip Community Group (PPCG). The PPCG was established in the hall in the 1970s with the aim of 'improving communication between and coordination of existing welfare services ... and establishing a multi-service community centre where residents could go to for assistance'. The PPCG provides assistance and services in relation to legal, health and housing issues for vulnerable people in the community and while services and programs have developed and changed over the years the commitment to social justice has remained a constant (PPCG website).



Floor plan of the 1939 Sunday School (Source: PROV)

In 1970, the Sunday School was also used as a temporary infant welfare centre while a new Council facility was under construction to the south of the church and in 1986 the building was refurbished and extended at the rear in the section containing the ladies' guild room, which included partial replacement of the roof and insertion of an attic level. Fooks Martin designed the 1986 additions. In 2016, further alterations and were made in this same area to create a kitchen and dining room to serve the clients of the drop-in centre operated by Uniting Care in the building.

## References

Bomford, Janette, 'The spirit of St Kilda: Places of worship in St Kilda'.

<http://skhs.org.au/SKHSchurches/churches.htm>, viewed 19 July 2021

Cooper, John Butler, *The History of St. Kilda from its first settlement to a City and after 1840-1930*, City of St. Kilda, Melbourne, 1931, vol. I, pp. 353-54

'Illustrated Australian News', Melbourne, 5 August 1878, p.139, illustration and description

Lewis, Miles (ed.), *Victorian Churches. Their origins, their story and their architecture*, National Trust, 1991

National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Fincham & Hobday Organ classification (B6113)

Port Phillip Community Group (PPCG) website, <https://www.ppcg.org.au/about-us/history/>, viewed 19 July 2021

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) **Version 1, July 2020**

Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV), VPRS 7882/PI Unit 406

St Kilda Uniting Church website, <https://stkildaunitingchurch.org.au/book-campaigns-causes-commitments/>, viewed 19 July 2021

St. Kilda Council building permit no. 10182, 1 February 1939 for church hall

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## Description

A Uniting Church complex, at the southwest corner of Carlisle and Chapel Streets, St Kilda. It forms a group of public buildings on the historic public buildings reserve that include the St Kilda Town Hall, St Kilda Primary School and the Holy Trinity Anglican Church and Holy Trinity Hall. The complex contains two main elements, a mid-Victorian church and an inter-war church hall.

The Gothic Revival-style church was built in stages from the mid-Victorian period. It is faced in polychromatic brickwork, having Hawthorn face brickwork relieved with red and cream brick detailing. The church had a cruciform plan originally, but later additions have distorted this. However, the intersecting gable roofs that form the original cruciform are extant. These roofs are clad in slate tile.

The front elevation of the church faces Chapel Street, and is set back behind a lawn. This elevation is asymmetrically composed of a gable end, and at left the base of the spire is expressed as a breakfront. Capping the gable is a finial (damaged), and the top of the gable bay is detailed with cream brick in bands across the bay, and in a stepped effect on the gable end. On the gable end is a circular vent, also detailed in cream brick. Below this are three lancet stained glass windows (the centre window higher) with rendered pointed arched mouldings above the window openings. Surrounding the window openings cream brick is also used, with red brick introduced towards the top. The cills of the windows are rendered. An internally illuminated crucifix has been fixed in front of the central lancet. There is a timber door at right, with a pair of ornate iron brackets. Above the door is a rendered pointed arch moulding which surrounds a small circular opening.

Brickwork on the base of the spire is detailed with cream coloured brick with bands and a quoining effect. At the base is a plain timber door with ornate iron brackets, and above is a pointed-arched moulding that surrounds a small circular window with stained glass. Another circular wall opening, slightly larger and detailed in cream brick, is towards the top. A rendered cornice caps the brick base and above this is the timber spire. Square in plan, this is articulated into three bays with panels of quatrefoils at the base and pointed trefoil arches at the top. The spire is a steep bell-cast hip roof with sprocketed eaves, that is clad in slate tile, and has small triangular openings on each pitch. The deep eaves of the spire have timber brackets.

The interior of the church is intact, and includes exposed timber trusses, which extend at a diagonal at the intersection of the nave and transept, supported upon corbels, leadlight glazing in windows, timber pews, and in the vestries trusses and gas fires.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) notes that the organ retains its mechanical action, detached console, tonal scheme and attractive casement incorporating diapered pipework.

The hall is situated adjacent to the southwest corner of Carlisle and Chapel Streets, set back from the boundary behind a shallow open landscaped garden. This inter-war hall, when viewed from Carlisle Street, has a broad transverse gable roof mass, the roof of the hall clad in unglazed terracotta tiles. Two small gable roof bays project towards Carlisle Street, and these have three double-hung sash windows each, with a panel of tapestry brickwork above the central window of each bay, and in the gable ends string courses of brick banding overlay lighter coloured brick, and soldier courses forming the parapets of porches to the left and right of the projecting gable bays and a porch adjacent to the corner of Carlisle and Chapel streets. Another small porch of note on this elevation has a small hood that is supported by timber brackets.

The Chapel Street elevation of the hall is also composed of two gable bays, connected by a recessed bay with a transverse gable roof. The bays adopt similar materiality and detailing as the Carlisle Street elevation, with each having a central pair of double-hung sash windows flanked by a single double-hung sash window. The central window of each bay has a panel of tapestry of stacked brick and towards the top of the gable ends are string courses of banding overlaying a light coloured brick. On the south side of the left bay is a porch detailed with a panel of stacked brick above its wall openings.

The gable bay at left is forward of a higher gabled element that contains the main hall. This also adopts similar materiality and detailing as the other parts of the hall and has high set windows. The hall, when viewed from many parts of the public realm, has a domestic scale and character.

An addition has been made to the west of the Carlisle Street elevation, which references the inter-war hall as far as massing, but uses different materiality and a contemporary architectural vocabulary. The building is in good condition and, apart from the addition at the west end, has a relatively high degree of external intactness.

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## Comparative analysis

According to Lewis (1991:10, 23) Methodism, like Presbyterianism, had no great architectural tradition when it was introduced to Australia, but by 1857 the Wesleyan Methodists had adopted the Gothic style for its churches. However, the design of Methodist churches was also influenced by the precept of John Wesley who directed that 'preaching houses' should be 'plain and decent' and no more expensive than necessary. Accordingly, many Methodist churches were 'small and unpretentious buildings' (Lewis 1991:10). However, other Methodist churches also demonstrate an increasing acceptance of more elaborate and substantial Gothic style structures. Nevertheless, the nonconformist tradition was usually still reflected by the internal layout with an emphasis on the pulpit and choir stall.

Crouch and Wilson were prolific church architects and most of their churches were for the Wesleyans, but they also worked for other Methodist sects.

As an early polychrome brick church by Crouch & Wilson, this church compares with the former Congregational Church at 32 Howe Crescent, South Melbourne. Also designed by Crouch & Wilson and constructed in 1867-68, this is now the second oldest polychrome brick church (after St Jude's Carlton, designed by Joseph Reed in the previous year) in Melbourne.

This church is notable for its spire with its bellcast profile roof rather than a true spire, which is a hallmark of Crouch's work, as is the use of polychrome brickwork (Lewis 1991:30). According to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) the organ has never been altered and is one of a small group of pipe organs in Melbourne in original condition.

Other interwar church halls include Holy Trinity, 2A Brighton Road, St Kilda (1925, Sydney W. Smith), and former St George's Presbyterian (Hare & Hare, 1927-28). This hall is representative of Wardrop's work and is notable for the distinctive brickwork, which is a hallmark of his buildings in Port Phillip, many of which feature modified or abstracted Old English detailing.

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## Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

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## Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with external paint controls. Apply internal controls to the church.

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## Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

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## Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992



## Other images

