Seventh Day Adventist Church, 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran

Heritage Place: Seventh Day Adventist Church
Address: 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran
Designer: Unknown
Builder: Unknown

HO Reference: HO780
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024
Year of Construction: 1935-36



Photograph of the Seventh Day Adventist Church at 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran.
Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Location map and extent of the Seventh Day Adventist Church at 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran.

Heritage Group: Religion
Heritage Type: Church

Key Theme: Community and culture
Key Sub-theme: Worshipping – Churches as an illustration of key phases of suburban development

Significance Level: Local

Controls:	☐	External paint controls	☐	Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	■	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy system controls

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The property at 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran (otherwise known as the Seventh Day Adventist Church), is significant. Specifically, the form, detailing, fenestration, materials and massing of the interwar church building, along with the adjoining porch and front boundary fence, is of local heritage significance. Later alterations and additions to the property are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is of historical significance as an example of an Adventist church building that was established in the City of Stonnington in the interwar period. Developed in response to both suburban growth and the expansion of Adventism, a branch of Protestant denomination, in the former City of Prahran and surrounds, the building not only illustrates the area's changing demographic, but also the growing influence of the Adventist branch of Protestantism during the interwar period. It is also noted for having served the community for almost ninety years for various church functions and activities, and thereby forms a tangible link to community culture and religious traditions in the municipality. (Criterion A)

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact and visually striking late interwar church building that exemplifies the stylistic turn towards the Modern in ecclesiastical architecture. Its stark gabled form and deep setback, paired with intricate clinker brickwork along the gable end in the form of lancet arches, creates an interesting contrast that imbues in the building a monumental yet stylistically progressive character. Further aesthetic interest is created by its prominent pointed arch window with flush brick lintel and diagonal leadlight glass, adjoining porch and retention of its original clinker brick fence incorporating octagonal squat piers. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Seventh Day Adventist Church is of historical significance as an example of an Adventist church building that was established in the City of Stonnington in the interwar period. Developed in response to both suburban growth and the expansion of Adventism, a branch of Protestant denomination, in the former City of Prahran and surrounds, the building not only illustrates the area's changing demographic, but also the growing influence of the Adventist branch of Protestantism during the interwar period. It is also noted for having served the community for almost ninety years for various church functions and activities, and thereby forms a tangible link to

		community culture and religious traditions in the municipality.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The Seventh Day Adventist Church is of aesthetic significance as a highly intact and visually striking late interwar church building that exemplifies the stylistic turn towards the Modern in ecclesiastical architecture. Its stark gabled form and deep setback, paired with intricate clinker brickwork along the gable end in the form of lancet arches, creates an interesting contrast that imbues in the building a monumental yet stylistically progressive character. Further aesthetic interest is created by its prominent pointed arch window with flush brick lintel and diagonal leadlight glass, adjoining porch and retention of its original clinker brick fence incorporating octagonal squat piers.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The Seventh Day Adventist Church at 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran is an interwar era church building that incorporates both Romanesque and Modern influences. The church is bounded by Wynnstay Road to the north fronting the junction with Woodfull Street, and Harvey Street to the south. The church building consists of face clinker brick laid with a stretcher bond. It is distinguished by a steeply pitched gable roof resulting in an open gable form. The clearly expressed load-bearing massing is characteristic of the interwar Romanesque style, while its stark and restrained appearance exemplifies the transition towards the Modern. The gable roof is clad with terracotta Marseilles tiles.

The façade presents a central and prominent pointed arch window with flush brick lintel, expressed angled brick sill, and diagonal leadlight glass. The window is set on an expressed section and is emphasised with lancet arched motifs above the lintel. The lancet arch edges are lined with a thin brick tile and internal panels lined with the thin tiling in a chevron pattern. The gable apex includes a narrow louvred vent. The main entrance and church porch are located within an open gable projection mirroring the main form off the corner of the front façade and western elevation. The side entrance consists of a timber double door with a face brick threshold. The porch's façade face includes a single, central Gothic arch window with diagonal leadlight glass, brick lintel and expressed angled brick sill, mirroring the composition and style of the main building.

The rear section of the church extends south with a gable roof form, and to the east and west with a skillion roof form. The southern elevation includes an enlarged contemporary steel framed window and door openings. The rear of the property is laid with bitumen and used as a parking area with a timber panel fence and gate.

The church building has a deep setback from Wynnstay Road allowing for an open front courtyard space that has been laid with concrete. A narrow side yard and concrete pathway extends along the eastern elevation and provides access to the rear parking area. The street front boundary is demarcated by a low face clinker brick fence. An opening provides access to the courtyard and church entrance, and is flanked by octagonal squat piers that are in use as planters.

The building retains its original ecclesiastical use. The main alterations to the church are the corrugated sheet skillion roof sections to the rear of the church, which remain obscured from street front views. The front courtyard and rear of the property has also been relandscaped and laid with concrete and bitumen. Nevertheless, the main church structure retains its original form, materiality and detailing when viewed from the public domain. It is in good condition and is of high integrity overall.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Rear gable roof section added (c.1951)
- Rear skillion roofed extensions added to the eastern and western elevation of the c.1951 section.
- Front courtyard laid with concrete.
- Rear space laid with bitumen with a timber panel boundary fence added.
- Steel framed windows along the southern elevation enlarged (by 2007).

- Four skylights added to the rear gable roof (not visible from the public domain) (by 2009).
- Minor accretions include new rainwater goods and flashing.

History

• Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel

Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

- ## Place History

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is an Adventist branch of Christianity that initially originated in Michigan, United States of America, before arriving in Melbourne in the 1880s (Hook 2017). Originally established at a small house on Highett Street in the suburb of Richmond, the growth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the late nineteenth century followed the establishment of a publishing house and the Sanitarium Health Food Company (Hook 2017). As a result, the branch gradually expanded across Melbourne. By 1895, over sixty-five tents were erected at the Seventh Day Adventist Camp in Armadale (The Age 1895, 10).

The land on which the Seventh Day Adventist Church at 8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran presently sits formed part of Lot 47 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor-General's Department 1849). Consisting of approximately thirty-six acres of land bounded by present day Malvern Road, Orrong Road, High Street and the line of Pohlman Lane, the portion was purchased as an investment by barrister Rober Williams Pohlman (Malone 2003, 15). While the northern end of the portion was quickly leased to brickmakers owing to its excellent clay, the southern end, inclusive of Wynnstay Road, was subdivided into generous allotments as part of the Highbury Park Estate for residential development by the 1880s land boom (G.W. Taylor c. 1889) (see Figure 1). By 1900, Wynnstay Road comprised a streetscape of freestanding Victorian boom era villas (MMBW 1900) (see Figure 2).

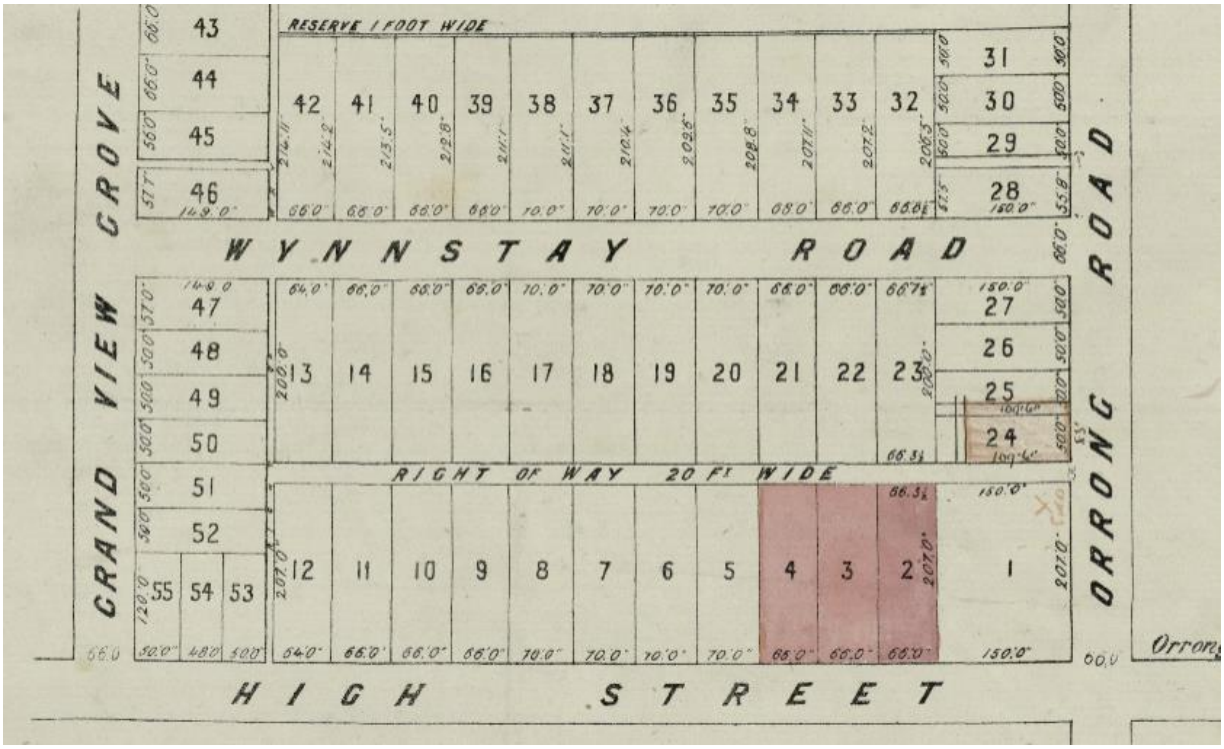


Figure 1. c.1889 Highbury Park Estate subdivision plan showing available allotments along Wynnstay Road. *Source:* State Library of Victoria.

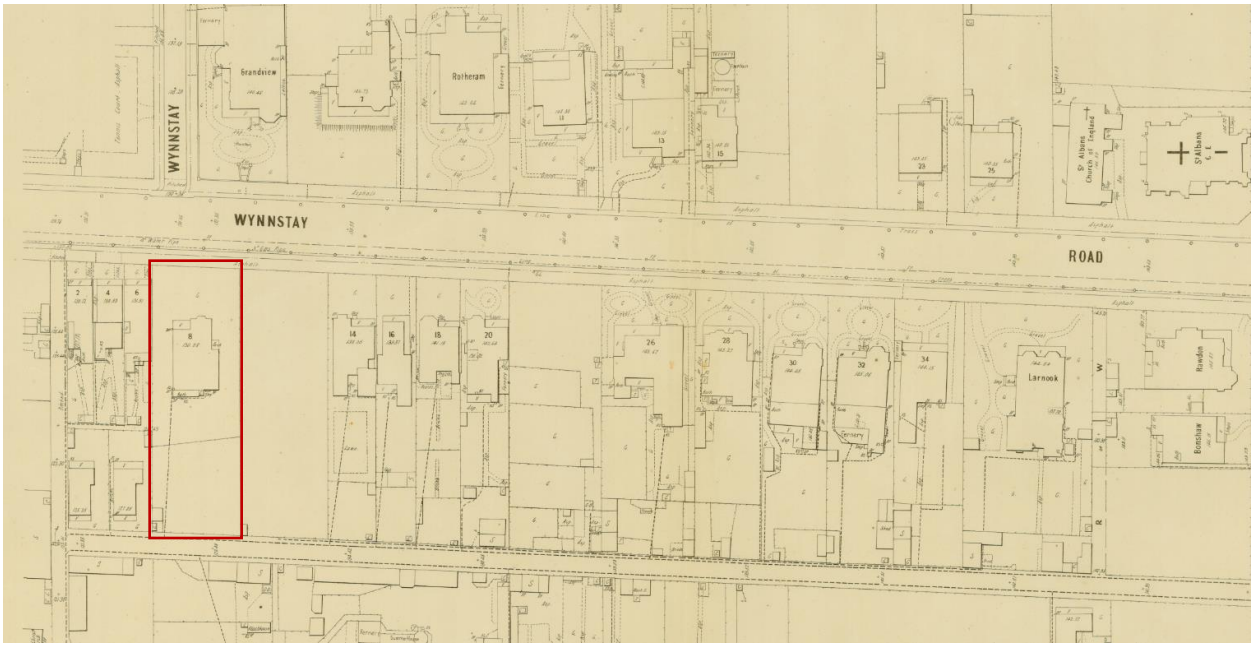


Figure 2. 1896 MMBW map showing the site of Seventh Day Adventist Church (then occupied by a freestanding Victorian villa) in red. *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church was constructed at a cost of more than £4000 following the demolition of the residential property at the site of 8 Wynnstay Road in c.1935 (The Age 1936, 13). Completed in 1936, the church comprised a steeply pitched gable structure distinguished

by clinker brickwork and a simple, yet bold form (The Age 1936, 7). It was formally opened on 3 February 1936 to a crowd of five hundred adherents by vice-president of the Seventh Day Adventists, Pastor A.G. Stewart (The Age 1936, 13). The development of this church not only reflected the growth of the Adventist branch of Protestant denomination by the interwar period but is also indicative of broader suburban development in the area following World War I, which saw the demolition of older Victorian dwellings in favour of 'modern' interwar developments.



Figure 3. 1951 aerial showing Seventh Day Adventist Church outlined in red. *Source:* Landata.

The site remained in use by the Seventh Day Adventist Church throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, and documented events at the site include the Adventist Youth Week in 1950, as well as a fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1986 (The Argus 1950, 4; South Pacific Record 1986, 15). A rear extension with a gable roof was added sometime prior to 1951 and is visible from Harvey Street. Today, the site continues to operate as a church building for the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Comparative Analysis

Although church buildings are well-represented on the municipal Heritage Overlay, they primarily comprise visually imposing and impressively ornamented nineteenth century buildings as opposed to more restrained examples that emerged from the mid twentieth century onwards. The several interwar churches within the City of Stonington that have been afforded protection are certainly more restrained than their nineteenth century predecessors, however, they nevertheless make use of medieval sources due to their early interwar provenance. Consequently, unlike the stripped back appearance of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, they are typically larger in scale, more ornamented, and characterised by Gothic Revival style lancet windows, porches and pinnacles. Such examples can be seen at:

- **St Catherines (Greek Orthodox) Church, 3B Epping Street, Malvern East (HO37).** Built in 1921-22 to designs by North & Williams, St Catherines Church comprises as an Interwar Arts and Crafts style church. It is more conventionally ecclesiastical than the Seventh Day Adventist Church due to its imposing scale, siting and use of Gothic Revival detailing, but nevertheless draws similarities in terms of its striking, steeply pitched gable façade derived from Gothic Revival sources, symmetrical arrangement, distinct brickwork and bold massing.
- **St Mary the Immaculate Conception Church and Presbytery, 87-91 Manning Street, Malvern East (HO419).** Constructed in 1920-23 to designs by architect Bart Moriarty, the St Mary the Immaculate Conception Church comprises a stripped back Interwar Gothic Revival church building distinguished by its use of Barrabool sandstone. Although it is more conventionally ecclesiastical due to its landmark scale and Gothic Revival features, it is restrained in its design and similarly relies on its strong massing rather than the use of excessive detailing.

Due to the dearth of appropriate examples within the City of Stonnington, the Seventh Day Adventist Church can otherwise be compared to late interwar churches that are found in adjacent areas outside the municipality. These include:

- **Former Frank Paton Memorial Church and Hall (now Deepdene Uniting Church) (City of Boroondara HO884).** Constructed in 1941 to designs by Scarborough, Robertson and Love, the Former Frank Paton Memorial Church comprises a later interwar church designed in the Romanesque Revival style. Although different in style to the Seventh Day Adventist Church, it shares similarities in terms of its striking gable façade, generally austere, stripped-back appearance, brickwork detailing and monumental massing. Its overall form is evidently more articulated and consists of a polygonal apse, broad nave with a prominent clerestory, and side aisles incorporating a partially closed loggia.
- **East Kew Uniting Church and Former Citizen's Hall, 142-142A Normanby Road, Kew East (City of Borrondara HO835).** Also designed by Scarborough, Robertson and Love, the East Kew Uniting Church and Former Citizen's Hall comprises a modest interwar church building derived from Gothic Revival sources. Constructed in 1938, it compares in terms of its brickwork detailing, gable façade, and lack of ornamentation. It is ultimately more conservative than the Seventh Day Adventist Church in terms of its adaption of Gothic Revival sources, as evident in its prominent arch headed windows and buttresses.

When viewed against these examples, the stark and restrained appearance of the Seventh Day Adventist Church emerges as a particularly distinct example of a late interwar church building in the municipality that clearly exemplifies the turn towards the Modern. Constructed in 1935-36, its break from medieval sources in church design is clearly expressed in its simple gable form and rejection of ornamentation. The only decorative features consist of the intricate brickwork along the gable end in the form of lancet arches. Consequently, the building not only forms a striking building along the streetscape, but also exemplifies the transition towards Modernist style church buildings that would later take off in the post-war period.

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

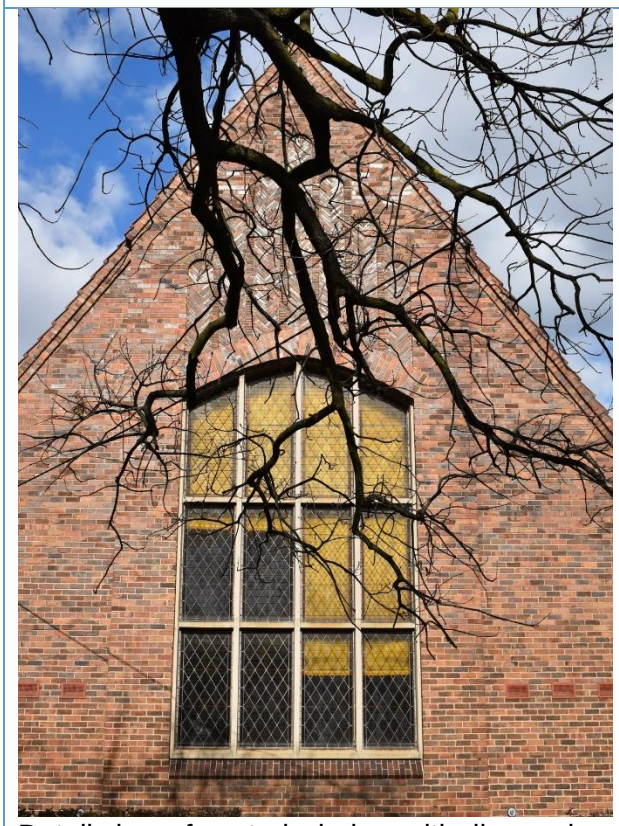
Images



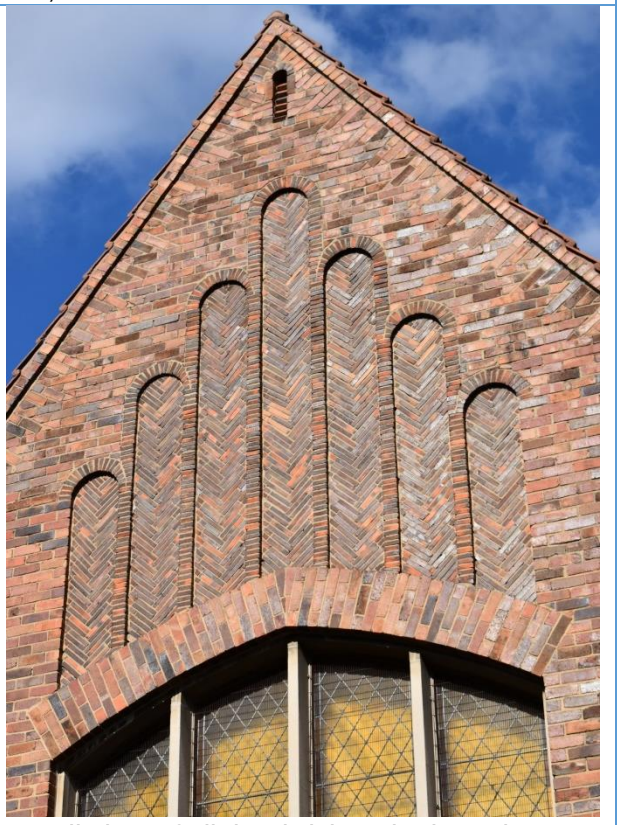
Overview from Wynnstay Road. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



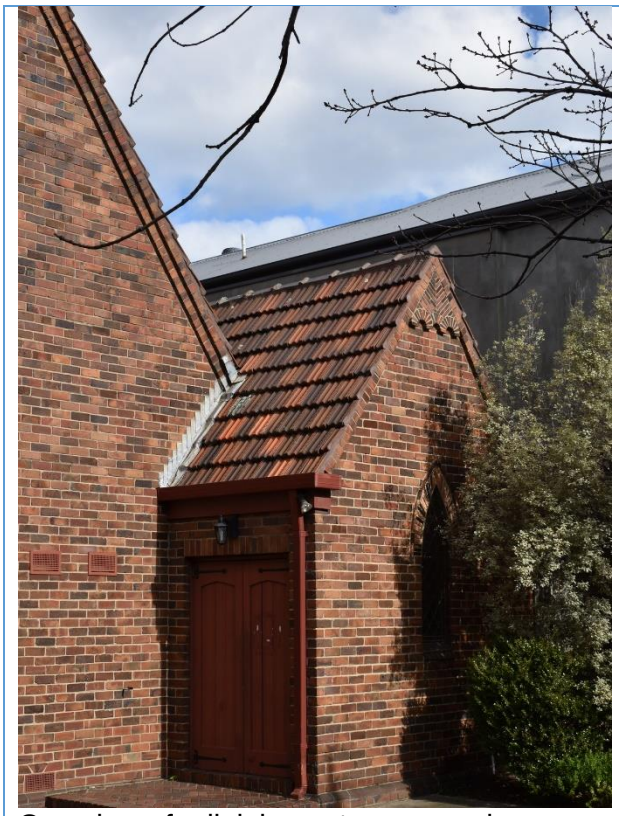
View of the maing church building, adjoining entrance porch and front fence from Wynnstay Road. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



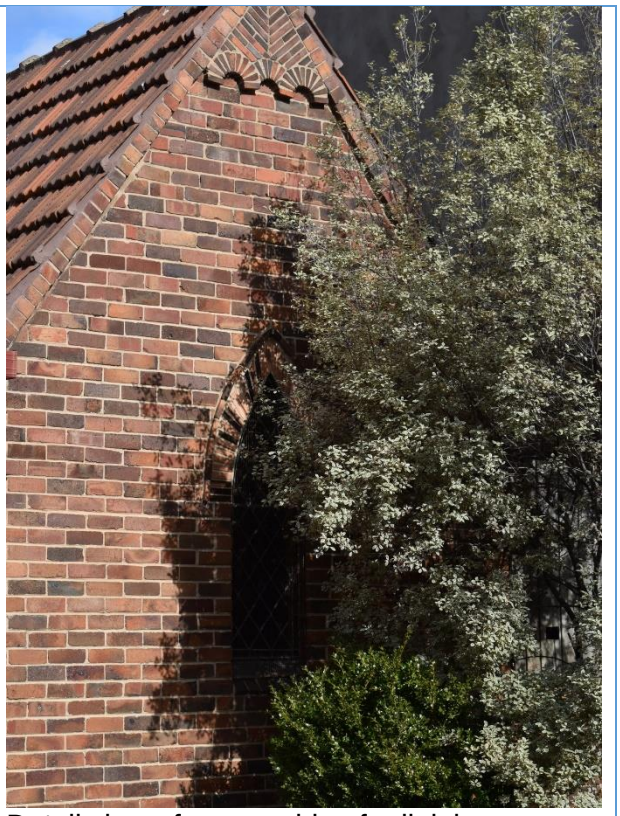
Detail view of central window with diagonal leadlight glass. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of clinker brickwork along the gable end in the form of lancet arches. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Overview of adjoining entrance porch. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.



Detail view of open gable of adjoining entrance porch. *Source:* Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2022.

Authors

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