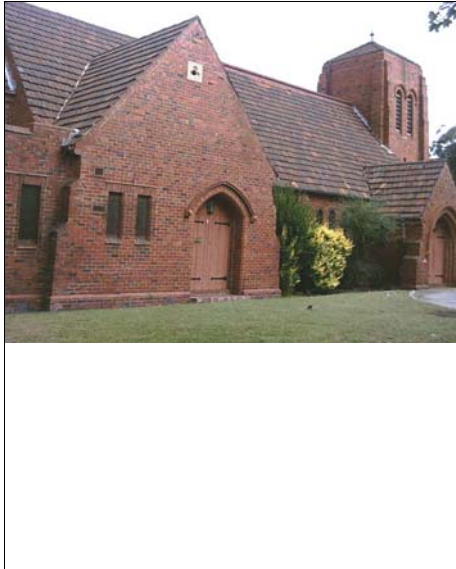


Identifier Scots Church
Formerly



Heritage Precinct Overlay None
Heritage Overlay(s) 431

Address 31A Scott Street
ELWOOD

Category Church

Constructed 1938-40

Designer Scarborough, Robertson & Love

Amendment C 70

Comment Mapping correction

Significance (Mapped as a Significant heritage property.)

What is Significant?

The former Presbyterian Church at 31 Scott Street, Elwood, is a red brick church in the Perpendicular Gothic style, evident in its implied verticality, narrow windows, four-centred arches and square tower. Designed by prolific Presbyterian architect J F D Scarborough, it was erected in 1938 to replace an earlier timber church (which still stands at 31B Scott Street).

How is it significant?

The church is of aesthetic, architectural and historical significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

Historically, the church is significant for its associations with the burgeoning residential development in Elwood during the inter-war period. Although located within a part of Elwood that briefly flourished in the 1880s, it was not until early twentieth century that the area began to fill out., prompting the erection of the original timber church in 1910 and, as the area developed further, its subsequent replacement by the present brick building in 1938.

Aesthetically, the church is significant as a fine and intact example of an inter-war church in the Perpendicular Gothic style. Although a stark, stripped version of this style was often used by architects such as Louis Williams, this more academic manifestation was relatively uncommon in Melbourne at that time. With its distinctive squat tower, implied verticality and minimal detailing, the church remains a prominent element on its large corner site.

Architecturally, the church is a fine example of the work of J F D Scarborough, a prolific architect who undertook many commissions for the Presbyterian Church from the late 1920s until the 1960s, and is perhaps best known as the prize-winning designer of the Scotch College Chapel.

Primary Source

Heritage Alliance, Elwood Heritage Review, 2005

Other Studies

Description

The church is a red and clinker brick building on a corner site, comprising a rectangular nave with steep terracotta-tiled roof, squat transepts, a projecting enclosed porch on Tennyson Street, and prominent square tower on Scott Street. The walls, divided into bays by buttresses, have narrow rectangular or false-arched windows with sloping brick sills and amber leaded glazing. The tower, surmounted by a low pyramidal roof, is embellished with Perpendicular Gothic detailing including corner buttresses, narrow round-arched windows (variously round-arched or false-arched) with brick drip moulds and bosses, and loopholes (arrow slits). The transepts and side porches have raked parapets and doorways with pointed arches, drip moulds, bosses and wide timber plank doors with oversized metal strap hinges. The gable end of the small porch is enlivened by a pattern of projecting header bricks.

History

One of the first churches in this part of Elwood was the Methodist congregation, founded in 1910, which erected a new church building in Austin Avenue in 1918. Two decades passed before the Presbyterians erected their own church in nearby Scott Street, for which a foundation stone was laid on 10 December 1938 by the then Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Councillor Arthur W Coles, JP, with the Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Right Reverend Dr John Mackenzie, presiding. According to the *Argus*, the new church, to be known as Scots Church, was 'a substantial structure designed on a modern adaptation of mediaeval types'. The new church, under the Reverend H H Donaldson, was opened in May 1940.

The building was designed by Scarborough, Robertson & Love whose principal, J F D Scarborough (1901-74), maintained a long and fruitful association with the Presbyterian church in the inter-war period. His most celebrated commission was a prize-winning design for the Littlejohn Memorial Chapel at Scotch College in Hawthorn (1934), but his office was also responsible for Presbyterian churches at Sandringham (1929), Strathmore (1936), North Essendon (1937), Elwood (1938) and East Kew (1939). His practice dissolved with the onset of the Second World War, but later re-emerged to design further Presbyterian churches in the 1950s and 60s including those at Bentleigh (1958) and Strathmore (1962), as well as the new Presbyterian Ladies College in East Burwood.

Thematic Context

This church can be considered as an example of the Perpendicular Gothic style, ultimately derived from fourteenth century English mediaeval sources and characterised by an emphasis on verticality and starkness. Amongst inter-war churches in Victoria, the style is less common than more ubiquitous Gothic Revival inspired by the Early English and Decorated phases of the idiom. While architects such as Louis Williams designed many stark brick churches with square towers, these represent what might be termed a Stripped Perpendicular style, denuded of extraneous historicist detailing. The more academic use of Perpendicular Gothic, conversely, is represented by a relatively small number of inter-war churches around Melbourne.

Examples include St Aloysius' Roman Catholic Church in Caulfield (Bart Moriarty, 1923), built of face red brick and featuring narrow lancet windows and a very similar tower. The former Presbyterian Church in North Essendon (1936), also designed by J F D Scarborough, is virtually identical to the example in Elwood, albeit realised in pale pink brick rather than red clinker brick. Another former Presbyterian Church, at Glen Iris (1953), is much later in date but otherwise represents a very pertinent comparison, realised in cream brick with a similar (albeit simplified) square tower surmounted by a low pyramid roof.

Recommendations

Recommended inclusions:

Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the City of Port Phillip Planning Scheme

References

Heritage Alliance. City of Moonee Valley Gap Heritage Study.

'A New Scots Church: Building at Elwood', *Argus*, 3 December 1938, p 4.

Public Building File No 8728, Health Department files, VPRS 7882/P1, Unit 1024. PRO.