

THE HERITAGE SITE & ITS HISTORY

On the 23 December 1849, the first Anglican service was held in St Kilda at the home of local solicitor Henry Jennings, (now) cnr Acland & Clyde or Fawkner Sts; on the same day his wife started a Sunday School with 16 children .

A Government grant of our historic site: approx. 2 acres (0.8 ha) for church, school & clergy housing

The the 1850s a school house was built, one of St. Kilda's earliest buildings, next to the current vicarage in Acland St.
The school operated until the 1940s, and the building burnt down in 1977.
A temporary wood & brick church was also built early 1850s

December: first full-time priest for St Kilda, David Seddon, arrives from England

29 Nov. 1854 church building started (minus chancel), the 1st Christian church south of the Yarra still standing – T shape, 111' long, nave 32' wide, 50' to roof ridge – to the design of Messrs Swyer & Purchas

'On Mr Seddon bidding farewell to his congregation in England, a young man whose professional training as an architect had been almost completed said, "I shall go to Australia & build you a church".' The man? Charles Swyer.

1853/5 first vicarage built on corner of St Leonards Avenue & Church Square – from 1986 to 2006 occupied by the Bishop of the Southern Region, previously used as a school, a community health centre and a private residence; the story goes that a daughter of the then Vicar died of TB in the 1870s, and prompted by the heartbreak and by fear of endemic damp it was decided to build another vicarage – the current Vicar's house – next to the church, and close to Acland Street
4. organ built by William Hill of London, shipped out to Australia & first

played 29 Jan. 1860; modified 1874 by Geo. Fincham; largely rebuilt in 1913-6, &, even more thoroughly, with new stops, over the last few years

1863 church consecrated (i.e. when the building was free of debt)

1874/81 church enlarged – chancel & vestry added – Sydney W Smith designs

Notes re the church itself

The original material is a rarely-used sandstone from Point King, Sorrento, brought by punt to St Kilda Beach.

Soon after completion some of the stone was seen to be deteriorating and had to be replaced.

A certain amount of the sandstone used later on is believed to have come from Barrabool near Geelong.

The church building is of special interest for its

spacious chancel and transepts, with the gallery & chapel screen having been interchanged in the early 1900s,

ornate gold leaf stencilling (restored to original design in 1996-8),

stained glass (Ferguson & Urie, William Montgomery & Brooks Robinson, et al.)

including a triangular western rose window (modelled on one in Lichfield Cathedral, & restored to pristine splendour in Sept. 2010),

the memorial chapel, featuring a reredos mural of St Michael & a marble font.

The spire proposed for the West entrance was never completed, largely in the wake of the Depression of the 1890s which hit St Kilda hard.