

# **HERITAGE REPORT - 71 AND 73-75 GREY STREET ST KILDA**

*Architect – Sydney W Smith 1826 - 1886*



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For the St Kilda Historical Association  
Revised November 2012**

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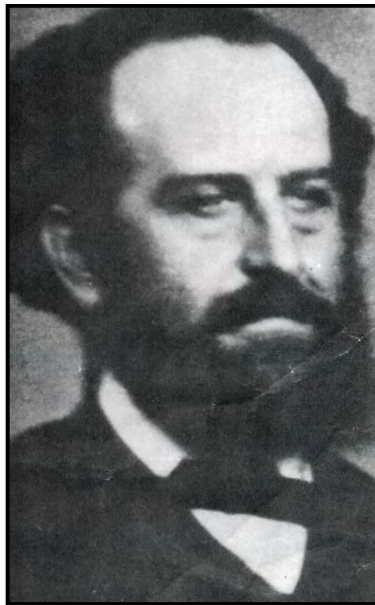
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## Introduction

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After Melbourne's founding in 1835, there was an extraordinary and famous period of growth and development, spurred on by Government land grants and sales, and the gold rushes. This period produced a blossoming of unique buildings, many of which survive to grace the city's inner suburbs. St Kilda being "a place of sensuous resort" was particularly endowed with fine buildings, and Grey Street was a favoured location. Many of these buildings throughout Melbourne have been lost, but St Kilda has, often through poverty and neglect, retained some fine examples. The two houses in this report are indeed such examples; fine houses in a relatively intact streetscape.

Numbers 71 and 73-75 Grey Street, St Kilda are a pair of grand two storied rendered brick mansions or large villas, which were designed and built by the architect Sydney W Smith in 1871.[1] For convenience the houses are referred to by the names of their first owners, as the Moore house (number 71), and the Shaw house (number 73-75). There is something solid, dignified and complacent about the houses, which is reflected in the first men who lived in them, and in Smith who designed them. Included at the end of this report is a comprehensive appraisal of Smith's life and work as an architect, surveyor and civil engineer in St Kilda, Emerald Hill and Caulfield.



*Figure 1 Photograph of Sydney W Smith*

Identifying these houses as having been built by Sydney W Smith is important in documenting his place in the shaping of St Kilda, and it confirms him as being a significant domestic architect.

These houses make up a remarkably intact streetscape of three impressive early houses, including their neighbour to the west, Eildon, previously known as Barham, built in 1850 and extended in the early 1870s, and a pair of 1890s terraced houses to their east. They are part of an even larger intact streetscape, incorporating a unique and substantial collection of mid and late Victorian buildings in this vicinity, including the adjacent Oslow terrace. It is remarkable that this streetscape survives since the area has suffered a steady decline from

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its heyday as the earliest settlement in St Kilda, and as one of the most prestigious in Melbourne at the time.

The fact that this trend has recently reversed has put pressure on the survival of the buildings, and their imminent sale is cause for concern. The rarity of such a unique streetscape in Melbourne is significant, and it displays the early grandeur of the suburb of St Kilda, at its peak when the houses were erected. This streetscape is integral to the identity of St Kilda.

In 2012 the current Council, the City of Port Phillip, was requested to either purchase the property or remove the Public Acquisition Overlay. A resolution to remove the overlay was passed this year. The report associated with the Council's decision identifies the buildings as being 'significant heritage buildings' but does not indicate their level of significance nor propose protection for them. An arborist report proposes protection for most of the large trees on the site including a large oak tree, a liquidamber and a number of pepper trees, mostly in the 71 Grey Street allotment. The Council determined to protect only the oak tree to the rear of Stradbroke.

The removal of the Public Acquisition Overlay and the subsequent lack of information and attention to the heritage of these buildings puts them at significant threat of change. The Moore House at 71 Grey Street is now on the market on two separate titles.

The two houses by Smith are also significant as they are still largely true to the architect's designs. This is more the case with the Shaw house, the façade of which appears to be authentic to when it was built, while the Moore house has had its façade altered apparently soon after it was built, with the addition of the fashionable and well designed arcaded veranda and rear extension. This change happened some time between the publication of the Vardey map in 1873 and the MMBW map of 1894. The Moore house retains its handsome iron palisade fence on a bluestone base. There is also a stable block, contemporary with the house to the west, fronting the street.

The Moore house is of note in that it was the birthplace in 1883 of Stanley Bruce, an early Prime Minister of Australia. A plaque on the front fence commemorates this event.

The houses are currently owned by the Presentation Sisters, a Roman Catholic religious order, who purchased them in 1932. The Moore house and its adjoining allotment is currently on the market with information now available showing some internal features, and the house layout. See pictures attached.

The observations and investigations in this report have been confined to the exteriors of both buildings. The two houses have been well maintained, and it is apparent that the interiors are relatively intact.



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## Site History

The first Government land sales in the St Kilda area were in 1842. These allotments in Grey St were bought by Firebrace (allotment 19) and Deane (allotment 20).

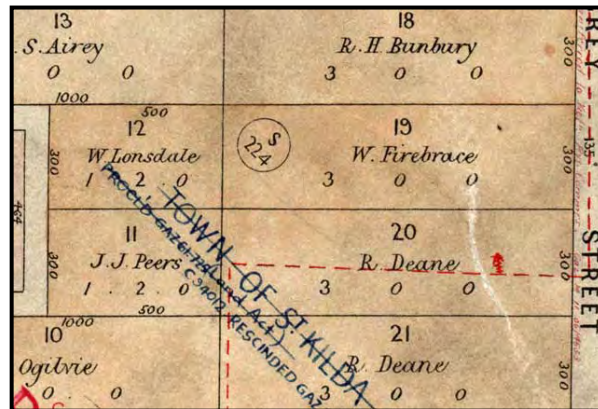


Figure 1 Firebrace and Deane Allotments post Crown land sale 1842

The allotments were resold in 1847 and acquired by Edward Green. In 1850 Green built a large villa, Barham,[3] designed by John Gill, on allotment 19. He retained allotment 20 as pleasure gardens, with an 'ancient and admirable Swiss cottage' on this site.[4] No trace of this intriguing building is currently evident on the property. It is likely that this structure was relatively insubstantial and was removed at the construction of the Moore house. It is unlikely that it could have been incorporated into the new building.

Though Edward Green died in 1861, his property was not put on the market until 1869 when both Barham and its associated land were sold. Barham (allotment 19) was then purchased by John Currie. He extended the house considerably and renamed it Eildon. The architects for this ambitious project were Reed and Barnes, prominent architects at the time (now Bates Smart). This building now belongs to the Alliance Francaise which has sympathetically restored it.

By 1870 allotment 20 (subdivided into two) was advertised by Smith as part of a tender for the building of two houses. The earliest rate records in 1874 for this land show that the properties, with two houses now on them, were then owned by Gavin Shaw and Thompson Moore. Notices at that time indicate that these buildings were of some substance: of ten and eleven rooms respectively. [5]

## Evolution of the Houses

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The two houses were designed by Smith for two prominent Melbourne gentlemen: Thompson Moore Esq. MLA., and Gavin Shaw.

**71 Grey Street - Thompson Moore MLA.** (13.9.1832 died 2.2.1912)

In his capacity as MLA, Moore was involved in and advised on many contemporary issues and projects in early Melbourne, including: improving Australian postal connections, 1872, building and improving water supply and reservoirs, 1885, facilitating land selection in Northern Victoria, 1884, and extending various Victorian country railway lines, 1875,78,80,84. He was also the owner of stores during the gold rushes in Bendigo and Maldon from 1853, and owned shares in a Northern Victorian gold mines.

Thompson Moore lived in the house for only a relatively short time before moving with his family to Toorak, though he maintained ownership of the property. Records show that the Bruce family was living here in 1883 for the birth of their son Stanley Bruce who was to become one of Australia's early Prime Ministers.



*Figure 2 Thompson Moore MLA 1832-1912*

**73-75 Grey Street - Gavin Shaw.**

During his time in St Kilda Shaw took an active part in the local community, and he was a councillor, mayor and magistrate in St Kilda in the 1870s and 80s. He also had a range of business and property interests, and was a member of numerous boards including - a Director of the County of Bourke 1877 and the Australian and European Bank 1878, Chairman of the Permanent Building and Investment Society 1879, Chairman of the Victorian Discharged Prisoners Aid Society 1879, Chairman of the Melbourne Gas Conference 1882, a director of the Jackson's Reef Gold Mining Company 1887, and a member of the Melbourne Hospital Management Committee, 1888.

Shaw had a large property portfolio including the lease of a substantial Gippsland property, Springfield, and ownership of the adjoining allotment (allotment 19) to the east of his house in Grey Street. This allotment was developed by Shaw in the 1890s into the two terraced houses which stand there today and which have recently been restored. He and his wife lived in the Grey Street house until his death in 1894.

## Description of the Houses

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### Thompson Moore Residence, Stradbroke.

#### 71 Grey St, St Kilda



Figure 4 Moore House 1871, 71 Grey Street St Kilda.

*Altered street facade and portico to the left and recessed wing to the right.*

The main central block of the brick house is of four bays, is rendered, and has double-hung sash windows. It has paired side chimneys, the cornices of which have been removed. There is a recessed wing running back at the west end of the building. The fenestration of the main block is regular, with four windows on each level, although there is a slightly wider pier in the centre. All openings on this façade are windows, with the entrance to the house located on the east side through a single storied masonry portico. The parapet which hides the roof has a plain cornice and regular spaced block bases corresponding to those of the veranda posts below. It is possible that the parapet was originally topped with urns.

The two storied arcaded veranda appears to be a later addition, and is of unusual design. It is of masonry, with three bays, and is supported at each level on half height cast iron posts on heavy shaped balustrade-height bluestone bases. Both levels of the veranda have wide, key stoned, elliptical arches. The upper level has a pierced masonry balustrade on a heavy base. At each end of the veranda at both levels, the arcades terminate in masonry pillars, incorporating the cast iron half columns, and the lower floor masonry pillars are quoined. A dentilated entablature topped with a fine cornice surmounts the lower arcade, and the upper arcade has a similar heavier treatment.

As mentioned, it appears that this arcaded veranda is not original to the Smith design. The first indication of this is that the cast iron columns, and also the design seem to be of a later style than 1871 when documents show it was originally built. When viewed from above on an aerial photograph, it is clear that the recess in front of the west wing, compared to the Vardy map of 1873, has been almost filled in. This change is also obvious on the MMBW map of 1894. It is also clear from an aerial photograph that this infill, which has a flat roof, is of the same construction as the adjoining arcaded veranda, as the walls are of the same thickness and construction. Another indication that this is an add-on is that this infill is

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clumsily integrated onto the main building behind, with the flat roof abutting the hip roof. The external detailing on this extension is in keeping with that on the veranda.

The veranda is also clumsily grafted onto the front of the main block. The veranda is outlined heavily as masonry on the 1894 MMBW map, but is shown as of a lighter construction on the 1873 Vardy map, in fact it is shown to be identical to the lighter original veranda on the Shaw house next door, suggesting that the original veranda of this Moore house may have been the same as that currently on the Shaw house.

There is a handsome single storied addition, probably a billiards, with a clerestory roof, at the back on the SW corner of the building. This room appears on the MMBW map but is not shown on the earlier Vardy map. It must to have been built at the same time as the front veranda, as its form, detailing and heaviness are in keeping with it and with the infill beside.



Figure 5 Moore House 71 Grey Street St Kilda.

*Interior - clerestory room/ billiards room, back south west corner. Circa 1885?*

At the rear of the house is a two storied veranda with cast iron friezes and upper balustrade of an 1860/70 design and style. The lower level has elegant, plain open timber spandrels at each post, below a timber framed cast iron frieze, which is highly characteristic detail of 1870 Melbourne buildings. This veranda appears to be original. The regular and elegant fenestration, with large windows to the floor on this rear facade, indicates that this was an equally important garden front, looking towards the bay. These two carefully planned facades, one on the back and one on the front, are unusual for Melbourne houses of this period.



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*Figure 6 Moore house 1871 71 Grey Street St Kilda.*

*Garden Front facing the bay. Clerestory room to left.*

This double fronted design is also shared with the earlier Barham/ Eildon next door, and was used to take advantage of the distant view of the bay, while the other main façade faced Grey Street. The service areas for this building appear to be housed in the west wing.

## The Shaw Residence

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73 75 Grey St, St Kilda



Figure 7 Shaw House 1871 73-75 Grey Street St Kilda

*Front façade with Moore House to the right.*

The central block of this rendered brick building is of four bays, all openings are windows, below a slate hip roof and a single storied veranda. There are four chimneys, two on each side, topped with unusual block decoration, instead of the usual classical cornice moulding seen on contemporary buildings.

The four upper double-hung sash windows are surmounted by hoods supported on consoles, with a flat banded string course incorporating the window sills. Just below, a lower band of identical string course at upper floor level is met by the ground floor veranda roof. The veranda design is unusual for Melbourne in that its posts and frieze are of timber, and harks back to an earlier era before the widespread usage of cast iron post and filigree construction and decoration. The veranda has four pairs of widely spaced, slender, timber Corinthian columns, with pierced timber spandrels, below a timber frieze of open lozenge shapes, and is topped with a shallow, canted, concave iron roof. Below the four upper windows, there are four long windows on the lower level, beneath the veranda.

The entrance door is sheltered by a masonry portico on the west side of the building immediately beside its neighbour's similar entrance portico.

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Figure 8 Shaw House 1871 73-75 Grey Street  
Front facade detail of the timber veranda.



Figure 9 Shaw House 1871 73.75 Grey Street St Kilda Front  
facade with portico entry

Set back to the left of this main block is a substantial hip roofed, one bay wing, running to the rear of the building. There are some lamentable single storied additions to this side of the building, apparently of the 1970s.

The back of the building is protected by a simple two storied veranda, currently in timber and clearly a relatively recent replacement, as it is clumsily attached to the building, and has turned timber balusters and lacks the detail that would be in keeping with the mid Victorian style. It is likely that this veranda replaced an earlier one of similar construction.



Figure 10 Shaw House 73-75 Grey Street St Kilda Rear Facade.  
Detail of rear of side portico and replacement back veranda.

## Comparative Analysis of Smith's Houses

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There are four known houses identified as being designed by Smith. Apart from the Moore and Shaw houses in Grey St, only one other known building survives, which is the vicarage at Christ Church in Acland St, St Kilda, built in 1883. This appears to be his only house in the Gothic style, which is sympathetic to the church beside it. Smith is also responsible for the successful and seamless additions to the church, done at this time when the parish was thriving. This vicarage is positioned in front of an earlier surviving Gothic styled vicarage of 1854.

### Christ Church New Vicarage 1883.

Smith's building is still referred to as the new vicarage, and is an attractive two storied rendered brick construction with gabled slate roofs. His favoured simple square design is this time enlivened with projecting gables forming a right angle, and between these is a right angled, single storied timber veranda with simple Gothic detailing in the spandrels, forming wide open arches between plain timber posts. A gabled service wing of one storey runs to the north. Additional interest is given to the building with two double height bay windows, one on the street front in the gable end. The other is on the entrance front facing the church, and this rises through the veranda roof and is gable topped. A further small gable at roof level is squeezed between two larger ones marking the front door. Further Gothic detailing is evident in the barge boards and window heads. The effect is pleasing and dignified, befitting such a building.



*Figure 11 Christ Church new Vicarage 1883. Front Elevation*

### Farncombe 2 Princes Street 1870

His own house was at 2 Princes Street St Kilda and was named Farncombe presumably after his origins in Surrey. He built it for his family in 1870, and its design is very similar to the two houses in Grey Street which were built soon after. Farncombe was demolished in 1972. The block has remained vacant and is used as a car park .



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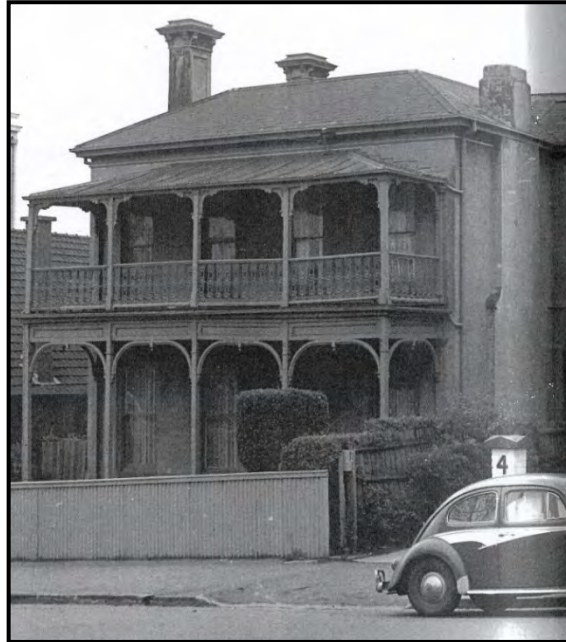


Figure 12 2 Princes Street St Kilda. Farncombe 1870. Demolished 1972.

*Front elevation with double storey veranda*

The 1965 Research Essay by Watters and Stafford contains the only known photograph of Farncombe, built in 1870. It shows a two storied brick rendered, slate hip-roofed building. The house is in what appears to be Smith's preferred classical style. It is a square building of four bays like the Grey St houses with a recessed, two storied wing to the east which appears to incorporate the main entrance. Although this is a narrower building, it has many similarities to the Grey Street houses.

The window treatment differs from the Grey Street houses in that here he uses four round headed windows on each level. Farncombe also has a two storied timber veranda very similar to that on the rear of the Moore house, with an upper railing of cast iron balusters of a similar pattern, but instead of the boxed in cast iron frieze on both levels on the Moore house, at Farncombe there is a timber frieze of closed rectangles on the lower level, while above, small, simple shaped spandrels finish the upper columns. The Farncombe veranda has similarities to the Shaw house timber front veranda, although the detailing here is not as inventive. Like the Moore back veranda, the Farncombe veranda is finished on the lower level with open timber spandrels, often used on buildings of this period in Melbourne.

Another similarity of Farncombe to the Moore and Shaw houses, is that Smith has again placed the entrance to the side on the east of the building, although this time it appears to be in a two storied wing, rather than through a single storied portico. Like the Moore and Shaw houses, Farncombe has its two level four bay façade of windows only. All windows on both levels appear elegantly to reach the floor. Farncombe has paired side chimneys with classical corniced tops. The overall effect is competent, but it lacks the lighter elegance of the Shaw house, or the invention and imagination of the later Christ Church vicarage. This is puzzling as one might have expected a more virtuoso performance for the architect's own residence.

## Statement of Significance

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These two buildings by Smith in Grey Street are significant for several reasons. They form part of an intact streetscape from the earliest days, in such a prominent part of the city on the St Kilda Hill. These buildings are examples of early Victorian mansions, or more correctly large villas, of which few were built at this early stage of Melbourne's development, and even fewer of those built still survive. With the adjoining Eildon, they make up three unique double fronted houses, fronting both the street and the bay. These buildings are rare surviving examples of the work of Sydney W Smith, an important architect of early Melbourne. Smith was a St Kilda identity, whose work with various Councils has shaped the infrastructure of early Melbourne. Many of the buildings designed by Smith have been lost, including his work on the first St Kilda Town Hall. His most prominent surviving building is the Glen Eira Town Hall. These two remaining houses in Grey St are a significant link to this prominent architect, and are a unique remnant in a significant streetscape of early St Kilda.

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## Appendix – Additional Images





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