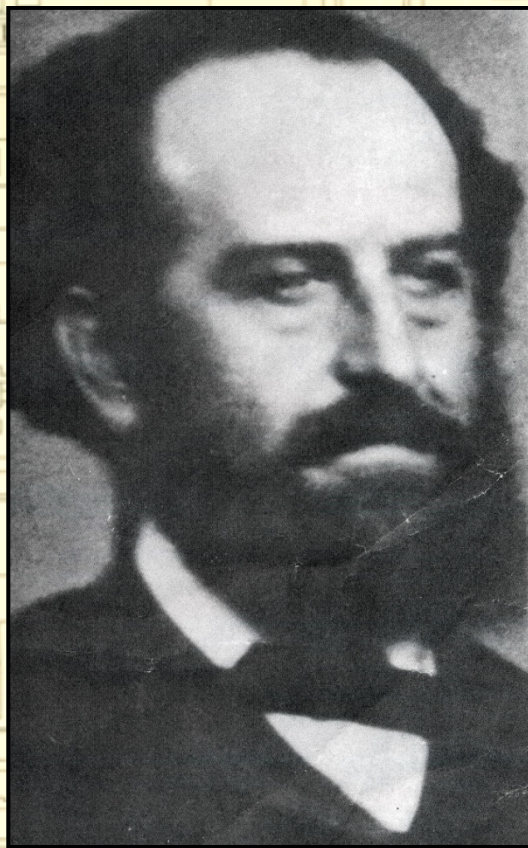


THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SYDNEY W. SMITH

(Born 1826 Godalming - Died 1886, St Kilda)



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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SYDNEY W. SMITH

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SYDNEY W. SMITH

Sydney W. Smith and the Beginnings of St Kilda

Sydney William Smith (generally referred to Sydney W. Smith) was born in 1826. Little is known of his family history other than that his father was Lieutenant John Smith RN of Godalming, Surrey¹. This information is perhaps confirmed by the fact that Godalming includes an area called 'Farncombe' which is the name Smith gave to the house he built for his wife and family when he first came to St Kilda.

Sydney W Smith arrived in Australia in Sydney in 1852 and came to Melbourne in 1857². He established his own architectural firm that year, a practice which was continued by his son until his death in 1933 under the name Smith and Ogg³ and later as Smith Ogg and Serpell. Though Smith's endeavours spread far and wide in the new 'Melbourne' he spent most of his life's efforts and established his family in the area of the first crown land sub-division in St Kilda. He designed and built houses and established his private practice in Grey Street, built his own home and together with his wife, Sarah Anne (nee Carter who he married in 1859) raised 9 children in their home in Princes Street called 'Farncombe' built by Smith and finished in 1871. He died at Farncombe on June 13th 1886⁴. His oldest son, also named Sydney W Smith, entered his father's architectural firm and continued and enhanced the reputation of the firm until his death in 1933.

When Smith arrived it was a period of land, and of course gold, boom in Melbourne- everything was for sale.

Such were some of the movements of real estate in St. Kilda at the time of the gold rushes. An idea of the stirring times may be gleaned from the statistics taken two years after the private sales of property, just quoted, at St. Kilda. The figures showed that in 1856 there were 82,428 persons, or one in every five of the population, engaged at the diggings, and in that year they won 3,053,744 ounces of gold worth £12,214,976.⁵

At this stage St Kilda was part of Melbourne, the road to St Kilda was more of a track than a road and houses were few and far between. Given the low lying nature of the area, the first area to be developed was on the elevated section of the Upper Esplanade and along what is now Fitzroy Street.

¹ St Kilda Advertiser Orbituary Sydney W Smith 18th Jun 1886

² Sydney W Smith CE Architect, Engineer and Surveyor. History of Architecture part 4 Research Essay H E Watters and B T Stafford. 5.9.1965

³ The Argus 15th Dec 1933 Obituary

⁴ Public Records Office Index top Wills, Probate and Administration Records 1841-1925

⁵ Cooper History of St Kilda pg Ch6 pg 110.

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Figure 1 St Kilda Road Date??

The immediate area of the original village of St Kilda clustered to the south of Fitzroy Street with the Esplanade to the west, Grey Street to the east and Robe Street to the south. This area was the first to be subdivided and sold off in large allotments by the Government in 1842 and formed the basis of the many large mansions including Barham (now Eildon). The specific area of interest in this analysis of Smith's work relates to his domestic architecture on allotment 20 adjoining what is now Eildon on allotment 19. The first private owners of these allotments were Firebrace and Deane.

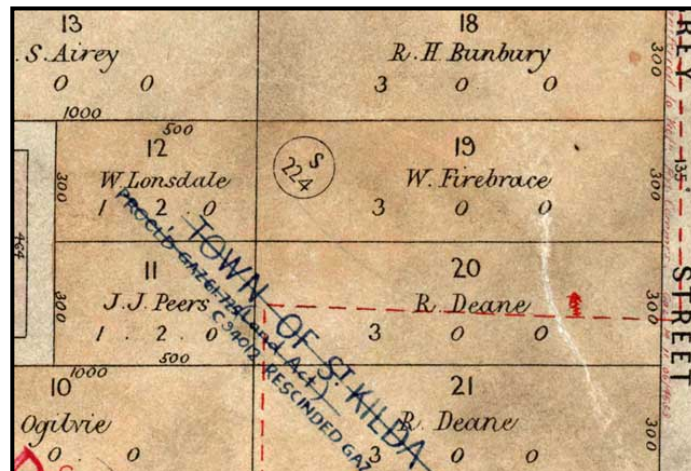


Figure 2 Parish Plan M27 showing the original Crown allotment 20

This land was resold in 1847, providing an important step in establishing St Kilda as a prime residential area. The prices realized on the day did not apparently meet the flowery language used by Mr. Brodie, the auctioneer who included such phrases as-

'A panoramic El Dorado that will replace the bloom on the palled cheek, or restore the vigour of the weak. St Kilda's sea breezes keep the atmosphere at a cool and healthy temperature'.⁶

Both allotments were purchased by Edward Green who built a house for himself named Barham at 51 Grey Street. Barham was designed by architect John Gill and completed by 1852. Its only neighbour was a house called Fernleigh to its north. Barham proved both an adornment and a barrier to growth for Grey Street being the primary house and land occupying a large

⁶ Cooper History of St Kilda Ch 3 pg 42 Quoting from the Port Phillip Patriot 2.2.1847

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parcel of 9 acres in this section of St Kilda⁷. It took another 20 years (nearly 10 years after Green's death in 1861) before the land again came on the market in 1869.



Figure Eildon before the building was extended in 1871

Both Barham and the rest of the land were then put onto the market and sold⁸. Barham, still with some land, was sold to John Currie, subject to the tenancy of Richard Twentyman whilst its adjoining allotment number 20 was subdivided and advertised by Sydney Smith as being up for tender for the building of two large houses⁹. By 1873 the 2 houses were built and their outline could be identified in the survey of the area done by the Surveyor of the St Kilda Borough, John E S Vardy.¹⁰ St Kilda at this time was favoured by many of the wealthier members of Melbourne's establishment as a retreat from Melbourne proper. The houses were grand mansions usually set in elaborate garden allotments. These were the people being targeted to purchase the new properties and developments now on the market in this area of St Kilda.

Another writer, of contemporary date, Thomas McCrombie says:

"At this period, so great was the want of house accommodation, that those whose vocation would permit took refuge in the suburbs. St. Kilda was the favourite place for merchants, and members of the legal profession; it boasted the twofold advantage of being near the city, and of possessing one of the finest marine views in the world."¹¹

The two domestic houses designed and built by Smith are Stadbroke, or the Moore residence at 71 Grey Street and its immediate neighbour, the Shaw residence at 73-75 Grey Street. The two houses are both largely intact and surrounded by relatively large garden allotments and form part of a cohesive streetscape along this section of Grey Street.

⁷ James Kearney Surveyor General's Office Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs 1855. (attachment 1)

⁸ The Argus 4.8.1869 Advertisement for sale of Barham and related land.

⁹ The Argus 21.02.1871 Advertisement for tender to build 2 storey house.

¹⁰ John E S Vardy Surveyor of the St Kilda Borough. (Attachment 2)

¹¹ Cooper, History of St Kilda Ch 3 pg59

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St Kilda Surveyor and Municipal Architect

The first plans for St Kilda date back to 1845; in 1857 it was declared a municipal district and in 1864 it became a borough with a population of 6000. This number steadily increased to 10,000 by 1880.

Sydney W Smith was initially appointed the first surveyor for the St Kilda Road Board (the precursor to the Borough of St Kilda incorporated in 1858)¹² and subsequently became the surveyor for the new Council. In his role as Surveyor he proceeded to draw up the plans for the first Council chambers. In 1859 the Council obtained a grant of Crown land from the government and was able to sell some of the land to build a new road from Carlisle Street West to Acland Street and the Esplanade and also to apply the money to building a new Town Hall and Municipal offices. The site was located in the second area to be developed in St Kilda on the eastern side of Grey Street at the apex of the corner of Grey Street and Princes Street. The site already had the Court house on the corner so it was Smith's task to integrate the existing court house with the new Council chambers which were built immediately behind.

"In addition to the building of the Town Hall, a considerable improvement to the Court House is in the course of being effected, by the erection of a handsome portico with pediment and flight of steps facing the angle formed by the junction of Grey and Barkly Streets, and on either side of the portico, facing the two above named streets, is a colonnade of pillars in the Roman Doric style".¹³



Figure 3 Original St Kilda Town Hall and Court Building

Although the Town Hall rapidly found itself outmoded by the population increase, pictures of it show an elegant marriage of the old and new elements of the building using classical motifs which were clearly familiar to Sydney W Smith and were used again, if on a much larger scale, for his design of the Town Hall for the newly established City of Caulfield in the 1870s.

The St Kilda Council at the time congratulated itself on the savings they effected by using an in-house staff member designated as 'Surveyor' to do the design and building of the Town Hall.

¹² Sydney W Smith CE Architect, Engineer and Surveyor. History of Architecture part 4 Research Essay H E Watters and B T Stafford. 5.9.1965

¹³ Cooper, History of St Kilda Ch 22 Quoting from the Argus.

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“It was believed at the time, to be the only Town Hall in the colony for which premiums for the design and commissions to the architect for superintendence had not been paid.”¹⁴

On this occasion a special provision had to be made by the State Auditor General to allow Smith to act in these capacities. This issue of attribution and payment became an ongoing concern raised on more than one occasion in his role as a member of the early Victorian Institute of Architects’ which took issue with the State government when it attempted to use public servants to usurp the role of architects in the supervision of buildings designed by architects¹⁵. Describing themselves as “the Memorialists” they presented a submission on this matter to the Commissioner for Public Works in 1874 and again in relation to the design and building of the Eastern Market in 1875.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cooper History of St Kilda chapter 22 Quoting from the Argus.

¹⁵ DEPUTATION. (1874, July 23). *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1956), p. 6. Retrieved May 10, 2012, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5874941>.

¹⁶ THE PLANS FOR THE NEW EASTERN MARKET. (1875, March 22). *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1956), p. 6. Retrieved May 10, 2012, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11514116>.

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The St Kilda Surveyor and Engineer

The Cooper 3 volume History of St Kilda describes the general area of St Kilda beyond the central part of the City of St Kilda, as being largely rural with the main activity being the grazing of cows, roads were rutted tracks interspersed with tree stumps whilst other areas such as the site of the current City of Port Phillip Town Hall (formerly the second St Kilda Town Hall) was a swamp.

By 1859 Smith was establishing himself as an architect, surveyor and engineer. His first position was as the first surveyor for the St Kilda Road Board and subsequently the first surveyor in the newly established municipality of St Kilda. From the 1860s onward he identified himself as the CE (Civil Engineer) for St Kilda Council. By 1860 he was also the surveyor for the Caulfield Roads Board until the establishment of the municipality of Caulfield at which point he became the surveyor for Caulfield Council.

He was also the Town Surveyor to the Borough of Emerald Hill (later the City of South Melbourne) from 1863- 1884 and held other positions as consulting surveyor for the boroughs of Sandridge, Essendon and Flemington. He served on the St Kilda Roads Board and various other bodies giving advice on road building and bridge building both within the immediate area of St Kilda and South Melbourne and also in Melbourne itself. For example in 1883 he had a letter in the Argus in relation to the maintenance of St Kilda Road where he identifies himself as the Town Surveyor for Emerald Hill¹⁷. He was also an early member of the Victorian Association of Surveyors, the Victorian Association of Architects and the Engineers Association.¹⁸

The enormous amount and variety of civil engineering work done by Sydney Smith is extensively documented in a research project done by Helen Walters and Brian Stafford in 1965 – ‘Sydney W Smith C.E. Architect, Engineer and Surveyor’. They document his many road works including the design and construction of Dandenong Road and the Upper and Lower Esplanade in St Kilda. He may have been fortunate to have been involved with road building as in 1859 what was described as a ‘novel machine’ was patented by Mr. John Finlay,

‘for the purpose of picking up the carriage way of the St Kilda Road, to the regular depth of two and a half inches, an operation hitherto performed by hand¹⁹.’

Vast areas of swamp had to be drained as most of Sandridge, Emerald Hill, St Kilda and Caulfield were part of a flat estuary system. Amongst the many surveying and engineering works done by Smith, most notable was the design and construction of the West St Kilda drain as well as bridges and other works associated with the construction of the railway to Hobson’s Bay.

Any one of these jobs would have taken up all of his time one would think. Walters and Stafford describe the conditions of his appointment to the various instrumentalities as ‘lenient’.

¹⁷ THE ST. KILDA ROAD. (1883, May 4). *The Argus*

¹⁸ *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1956) 14 Jun 1886

¹⁹ Cooper History of St Kilda Ch3 pg55

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'He was the full time surveyor to St Kilda for a salary of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum, later three hundred pounds- but had to attend the town hall for time equivalent to only four days a week. At Emerald Hill he had offices at Dorcas Street which he attended for two days per week for a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum and later, when he left St Kilda, for four days per week with a salary of three hundred pounds per annum. He was only acting surveyor at Sandridge and it appears that he did not have to attend any offices there during the week , At Caulfield he was part time surveyor receiving fifty pounds – later one hundred pounds: and when the shire hall was designed an office for the surveyor was included

,²⁰

²⁰ Sydney W Smith CE Architect, Engineer and Surveyor. History of Architecture part 4 Research Essay H E Watters and B T Stafford. 5.9.1965

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Caulfield Roads Board and Caulfield Council

Caulfield was relatively undeveloped until the 1870s and operated under the authority only of a Road Board. By the 1870s however development was proceeding apace with vested interests trying to turn what had been swamp land and sand pits into a developers dream. Thomas Watts was a key figure with a vision for the development of the Caulfield area. He was closely associated with Sydney W Smith forming both a personal and business partnership. In 1864 Thomas Watts and Smith entered into a partnership in an architectural firm which they dissolved in 1870.

Watts was one of the most Caulfield's most influential architects and was also a member of various Road Boards as well as and the fledgling Council of Caulfield. He won a seat on the Caulfield Roads Board in 1859. Although Watts held that position for only a year, he initiated major reforms in the way that the Board was doing business in Caulfield recommending the abandonment of the drainage of the Leman Swamp and proposing the standardizing of the levels for the roads to ensure consistency in road heights, drainage and provision for services such as gas lines etc. Since the Chairman of the Caulfield Road Board, W Murray Ross, was also the owner of the Leman Swamp and determined to see it developed, Watts' time on the Board was short lived - he resigned within a year. However all was not lost as shortly after that Smith was appointed as surveyor of the Road Board 'who quietly and tactfully introduced most of Watts reforms'²¹

In 1871, Watts reentered the political arena, winning a seat on the Caulfield Council and being elected as the first president of the Caulfield Council and Chairman of the Caulfield Roads Board until 1872. At this stage his brother William also won a seat on the Council described by Murray and Wells as being (with Smith)

'The Watts brothers, with Smith, formed a formidable surveying combination. They did much to improve the growing district and supervised the building of the Shire Hall.'²²

²¹ Sand Swamp and Heath Pg 124 P Murray and J Wells

²² Sand Swamp and Heath Pg 124 P Murray and J Wells

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The Architect and His Houses in St Kilda

In 1870, following the dissolving of the Watt Smith partnership, Smith went on to consolidate his own practice which was located private offices immediately opposite the St Kilda Town Hall in Grey Street. His main known domestic designs were for his own house which he built for his wife and family in Princes Street and the houses which have recently been identified as being designed and built by Sydney W Smith in Grey Street. All of these houses bear the hallmarks of his work with many similarities in their general design and detailing.

Farncombe was demolished in the 1970s however information is available from a student architectural study which provides details of both the general work of Smith as well as the details of this house.²³

Both houses in Grey Street are listed under the Melbourne Mansions Database as being designed by Sydney William Smith. The two houses come within the general protection of the City of Port Phillip's Heritage Overlay but do not have a specific citation and are not registered with Heritage Victoria. The remaining area of land on which they are sited was protected by both a Public Acquisition Overlay and a Vegetation Protection Overlay. This was put in place by the City of St Kilda during the 1970s when the Council acquired the land behind the houses owned by the Presentation Sisters to convert into permanent parkland and to provide public access from Neptune Street to Eildon Road.

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.²⁴ 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 Liquid Amber and a number of peppercorn trees mostly in the 71 Grey Street allotment. The Council determined to protect the Oak tree to the rear of Stradbroke.²⁵

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.

Sydney W Smith's house - Farncombe in Princes Street

After Smith's marriage to Anne Carter he lived near the Junction and ran his private practice from home²⁶. In 1871 we are advised of the first birth at Farncombe in Princes Street. It seems likely that this is the first house to be built by SWS and became the family home until his wife's death in 1815. The house is now demolished but pictures taken prior to its demolition in the 1970s show a double storey detached Victorian house with typical detailing of that era including a double storied balcony with iron and timber balastrading.

²³ Sydney W Smith Architect, Engineer and Surveyor. Watters and Stafford 1965.

²⁴ City of Port Phillip Minutes 31.1.2012. Amendment C91 to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme Public Acquisition Overlay/ Vegetation Protection Overlay..

²⁵ City of Port Phillip Arboricultural Inspection Report 71 Grey Street. Stephen Smith September 2011.

²⁶ Sydney W Smith Architect, Engineer and Surveyor. Watters and Stafford 1965.

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Figure 4 Farncombe 2 Princes Street (demolished)

See Citation attached for more details. Farncombe 2 Princes Street (demolished).

Sydney W Smith houses in Grey Street

As mentioned previously, the sale of crown allotment 20 in Grey Street provided an opportunity for Smith to use his architectural skills in building two large houses on what had once been the gardens belonging to Barham. By 1871 the allotment had been subdivided with two storied residences being advertised by Smith for open tender in 1871²⁷ and 1872²⁸. They were built by 1873, and as mentioned earlier, are the two houses which still grace Grey Street at number 71 (Moore House), 73 and 75 (Shaw House). The original owners are used to identify the houses.

The Moore House (Stradbroke) 71 Grey Street

The Moore house was built for Thompson Moore MLA where he lived for a relatively short space of time from 1873-1877. He retained ownership of it renting it to the Bruce family. By 1878 a Bruce child was born at Stradbroke.²⁹ On April 15th 1883 Stanley Bruce, a future Prime Minister of Australia was born at Stradbroke.³⁰ It appears that the Bruces moved on to the up and coming Toorak area in 1885³¹.

Additions were made to the Moore house during the late 1880s. These include the significant changes to the façade and additions to the rear. These changes are to be seen in the building outline provided by the MMBW maps of the area in 1894 and form the current configuration of this house.

See Heritage Report attached for more details. Moore House 71 Grey Street.

²⁷ The Argus 28.2.1871 Advertisement

²⁸ The Argus 4.6.1872 Advertisement

²⁹ The Argus 1.4.1878 Birth Notices.

³⁰ Australian Dictionary of Biography Stanley Melbourne Bruce.

³¹ The Argus Notices 24th Oct 1885

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Figure 5 Moore House 71 Grey Street CoPP Database

The Shaw House 73-75 Grey Street

The neighbouring Shaw house was owned by a well known merchant and Councillor and Mayor in the Borough of St Kilda, Gavin Shaw. The house is still substantially intact and is very similar to the pictures of Smith's own home in Princes Street. He also owned property to the south which he redeveloped in the 1890s just prior to his death, into the two terrace residences still there.



Figure 6 Shaw House 73-75 Grey Street CoPP Database

Both Gavin Shaw and Thompson Moore typified the type of people attracted to St Kilda during the 1870's - wealthy, well established and committed to making a financial and social contribution to their communities. All of these people appear to have mingled with each other in this community with many serving on the fledgling Council, being on various Boards and making contributions through mutual membership on management committees such things as Christ Church in Acland Street.

See attached Heritage Report for more details.

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Neighbouring Houses - Barham (Eildon) and Fernleigh (Mittagong)

As already described, Barham and Fernleigh sat to the north of allotment 19. Edward Green was the original owner of Barham where he lived until his death in 1861. At this stage his wife left for England and his estate was administered by his neighbour, William Nicholson (1816-1865). Nicholson was a Melbourne grocer who became alderman, then Lord Mayor of Melbourne. He entered Parliament in 1859 and immediately became Premier of Victoria (1859-60). He owned Fernleigh though he and his wife Sarah Birkett lived in Barham after Green's death, as it was considered much grander than Fernleigh.

When Nicholson died in 1865, his widow Sarah married Richard Twentyman and continued to live at Barham until June 1870. Though Barham was sold with Twentyman as its ongoing tenant, he and his wife Sarah vacated Barham undertaking extensive renovations at Fernleigh, transforming it into a palatial grand mansion in the Italianate style and renaming it Mittagong. Architect Charles Webb was responsible for remodeling and extending Fernleigh to a twenty room mansion.



Figure 7 1872 Mittagong Heritage Collection City of Port Phillip

Barham was built originally so that it had a garden entrance facing the sea and a carriage way entrance onto Grey Street including stables and service areas. After its sale in 1870 its original alignment was retained however on a much reduced allotment. The new owner of Barham, John Currie, commissioned Reed and Barnes as architects for the extensive additions and renovations he had in mind. The relatively modest Barham was transformed by the architects to make up the current substantial building now known as Eildon and currently owned by the Alliance Francaise.

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The allotment was further reduced when the remaining strip of garden aligned with 71 Grey Street was purchased by the then owners in the 1930's and became part of the landholding of the current owner, the Sisters of the Presentation Convent.

Mittagong and Eildon shared the Italianate boom style which was all the rage at the time and provided a contrast to the more austere style adopted by Smith for the two houses designed and built by him. Until the 1940's Mittagong, Barham (now Eildon) and the two houses built by Smith would have provided a united and impressive frontage to Grey Street. Even today Eildon, Stradbroke and the Shaw House with the neighbouring terraces provide an almost intact streetscape reflecting the former splendor of that area.

Eildon originally primarily faced the sea but this aspect has been built out following subsequent land sub-divisions including the unsympathetic block of flats built on the land at the back of Eildon. Stradbroke and the Shaw House share the benefit of the spacious gardens surrounding them and the land, now a public park, which is at the back of these buildings and runs between Eildon Court and Neptune Lane. The large oak tree has been identified as being of significance and needing to be retained in any redevelopment of this land.³²

The area maps, Kearney 1855, Vardy 1873 and MMBW 1897 (see attachments 1, 2 and 3) show the changes to the allotments from the Kearney survey of 1855 to the MMBW survey of 1894. They provide information about the lives of the wealthy with large allotments facing Grey Street, but also the allotments of the people providing them with domestic services and living in tiny houses in Neptune Lane. By the end of the 19th Century, Robe Street is also pretty well fully developed with large houses and terrace houses owned by the middle ranks of those with money.

Sydney W Smith - Christ Church Alteration and Vicarage

During the 1870s Smith maintained his juggling act of representing his practice, acting as Surveyor and Civil Engineer and maintaining membership of various professional bodies including the Victorian Institute of Architects and the Association of Engineers. He also combined this with playing an active role in his local church, Christ Church in Acland Street.

³² City of Port Phillip Minutes 31.1.2012. Amendment C91 to the Port Phillip Planning Scheme Public Acquisitionoverlay/ Vegetation Protection Overlay..

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Christ Church was originally constructed in 1854-57 by architects Purchas & Swyer and was enlarged in 1874 and 1881 to the designs of Sydney W Smith³³. The extension in 1874³⁴ was described in the Argus as:

“An elegant addition testifying to the zeal and energy of the wardens and vestrymen and reflecting great credit on Mr. Sydney W Smith, the architect”



Figure 8 Christ Church Vicarage 1881 Sydney W Smith³⁵

In 1881 Sydney W Smith designed and built the Christ Church Vicarage which sits to the South of Christ Church itself, also facing Acland Street. It was built in the neo-gothic style typical of ecclesiastical buildings at that period. Though it is the only building which has been identified as being built by Smith in this style, it shows his skill in addressing the setting and appropriate style of building fashionable at the time. It is one of the few buildings which have been identified as being designed by Smith and is on the Heritage Register as forming an important part of a Heritage Place.

³³ Heritage Victoria Christ Church Complex

³⁴ The Argus 24.12.1874

³⁵ Picture from Walking Melbourne Database

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The Final Years - Caulfield Boom and Bust

During the 1860s the district of Caulfield was being transformed from an area of swamps and sand pits to a series of townships or settlements and eventually to the City of Caulfield. As for St Kilda, much of the area was low lying which led to many issues concerning drainage and epidemics including typhoid as a result of poor sanitation and pollution of ground water. Since it was not declared a Shire until 1871 the Roads Board had to use all its ingenuity to keep in check those wishing to exploit the many loopholes in control this entailed. The Chairman of the Board was Samuel J Masters from 1864-1868³⁶ who had primary responsibility for the many issues besetting the area including issues surrounding Paddy's Swamp (now Caulfield Park) and the previously mentioned Leman Swamp, leased and eventually owned by Ross. Whilst there are few specific mentions of Smith there can be no doubt that he would have had responsibility for the carriage of many of these issues including transforming rural land into a system of interlinked roads and subdivisions.

By the mid 1870's, work was underway to provide Council chambers for the new Shire. A site was finally purchased on the corner of Hawthorn and Glen Eira Roads and Smith started work on preparing plans and estimates which were finalized by 1876. Unlike the progress of the St Kilda Town Hall which took several years, work on the Caulfield Town Hall took decades with the foundation stone not being laid until 1885. This was in fact the last of SWS's projects for the Shire of Caulfield and probably his most ambitious project. The picture above gives an idea of the original scale of the project and shows all the hallmarks of the 'boom period style' complete with a multiplicity of classical features, a grandiose tower, pediments and semi- expressed columns.



Figure 9 Proposed Caulfield Town Hall Woodcut

This period of boom for the late 1770s to mid 1880s was relatively short lived but catastrophic in its social effects with work schemes having to be continued until the start of the First World War. Caulfield was perhaps particularly hard hit.³⁷

³⁶ Sand Swamp and Heath. Peter Murray and John Wells pg 8

³⁷ Sand Swamp and Heath. Peter Murray and John Wells pg 21

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‘Land prices in Caulfield doubled in the period 1880-81, steadied for a time and then began to rise again at the end of 1882. By the mid 1880s Caulfield was a chaos of land sales - grand houses appeared almost overnight and whole new estates of cottages appeared in weeks. Services could not keep up with the housing boom and herein lay the seeds of the epidemics which swept Caulfield for the new four to five years. The gap between spending on luxuries and spending on essential services was incredible.

Instability was the keynote. The old brigade retired from the Council: JC Lloyd went, with S J Masters, W Lempierre, the Watts brothers, Secretary Hart and Surveyor Smith.’

The erection of the Town Hall marked the end of an era and perhaps the end of Smith’s life. He was dismissed from Caulfield Council in January 1886 and died 6 months later on June 13th 1886.³⁸ Perhaps because of this ignominious and probably underserved fall from grace, the obituaries for Smith are scanty and generally inaccurate.

It was left to his son who shared in his practice to take over the reins which he built into a practice which made a huge contribution to the next 40 years of Melbourne’s buildings.³⁹ It became Smith and Ogg in 1889/90 and later still Smith Ogg and Serpell. Included in their work were the new Port Authority Building in Market Street (awarded the Royal Victorian Institute Architects medal 1933), Harley House, the Victoria Building, the Offices of the Colonial CO (all in Collins Street Melbourne) and the CM Read Stores in Chapel Street, Prahran. Other buildings designed by the firm include the John Danks and Son in Bourke Street, and the Union Steamship Co William Street, and several branch offices of the State Savings Bank, the Oriental and City Club Hotels in Collins Street, and the Old London Inn in Market Street.

Sydney W Smith is buried at the St Kilda Cemetery where a memorial tomb stands. This is fitting as, even here, Sydney W Smith was responsible for the survey and layout of the St Kilda Cemetery.

³⁸ *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic. 14 Jun 1886

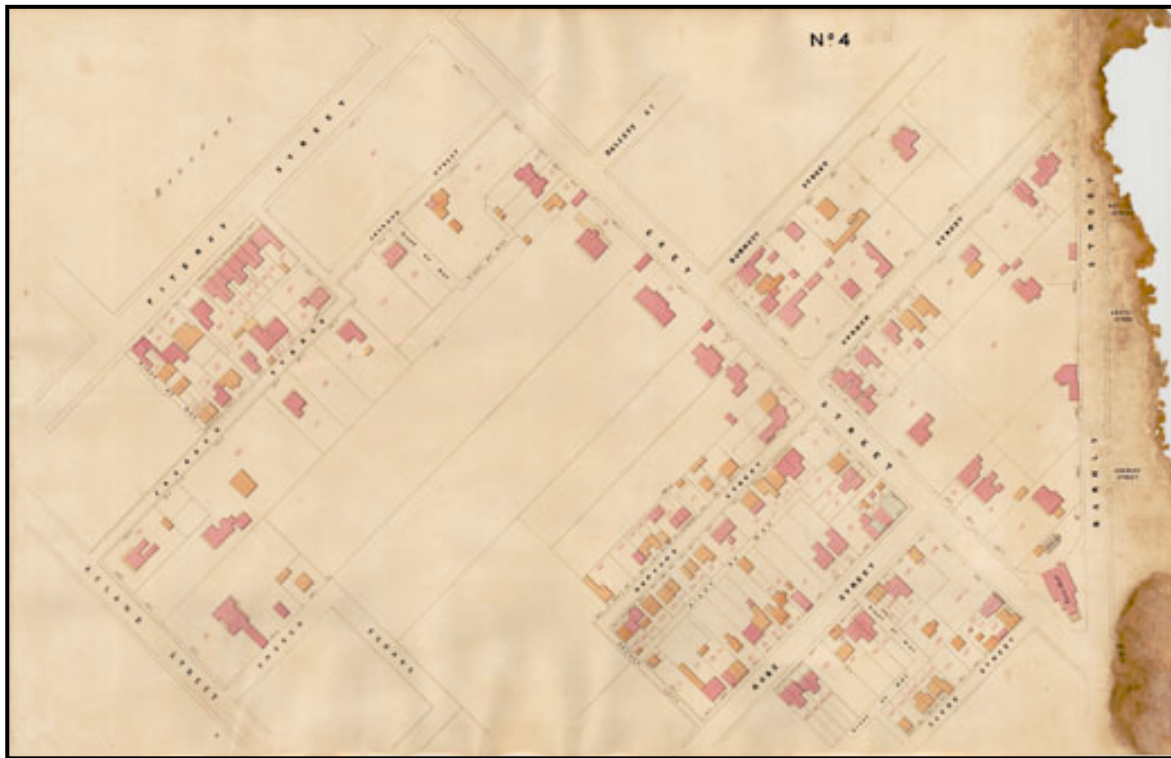
³⁹ *The Argus* (Melbourne Vic 15th Dec 1933 Obituary.

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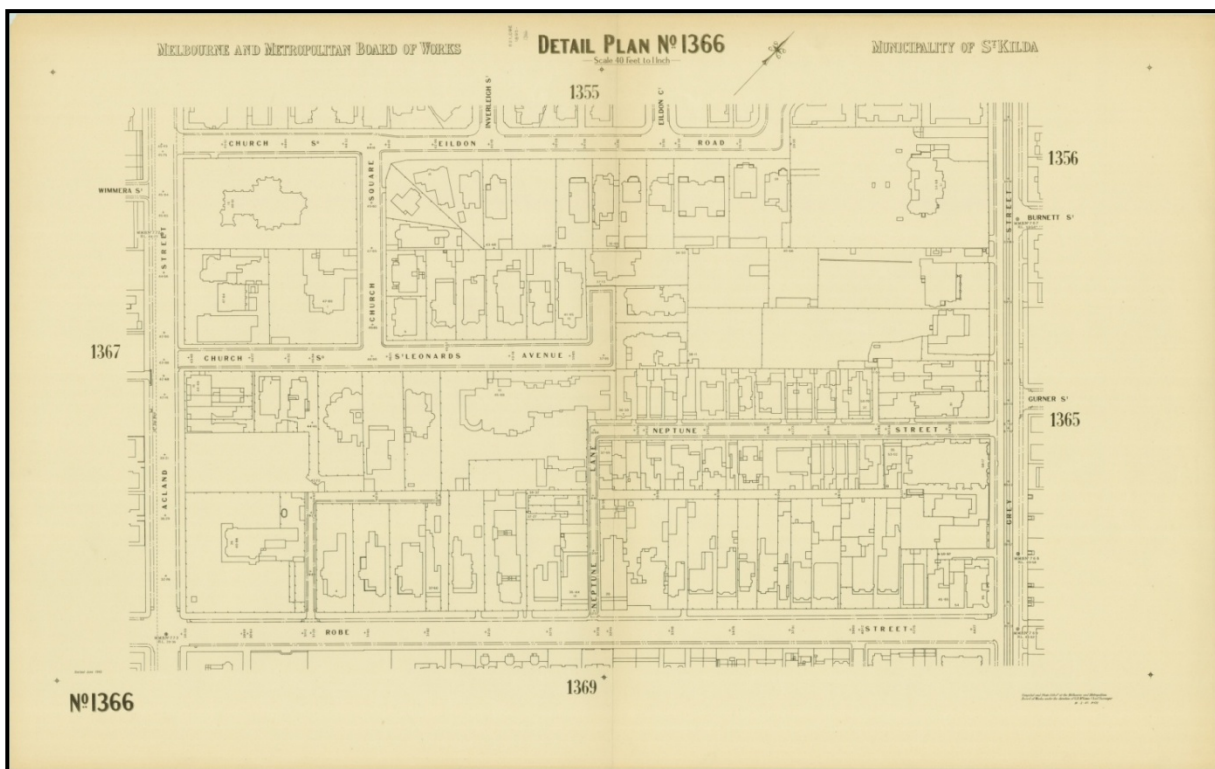


James Kearney Map 4 Melbourne 1885 (detail) Maps at St Library

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St Kilda Survey John Vardy 1873 City of Port Phillip Collection



Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works 1894