

Old St Paul's Schoolroom

4-14 Turnbull Street, Thorndon, Wellington (AKA 19B Hobson Crescent)
Relocated from 21-25 Kate Shepherd Place



Old St Paul's Schoolroom, 4-14 Turnbull Street, Thorndon (Photos: *Charles Collins, 2015*)



Summary of heritage significance

- The Old St Paul's Schoolroom is a fine example of a 19th century timber Gothic ecclesiastic/school building. The exterior is notable for its simple overall form and for its decorative north façade, and the interior is notable for its fine timber 'stepped-vault' ceiling.
- The building has historic significance for its construction and long use by the Anglican Church.
- Now over 110 years old, the building has been used for many church and community activities giving it a social significance complementary to that of its parent church.
- A large amount of original fabric remains, giving the building technical interest and a very high level of authenticity.

District Plan:	Map 18, reference 276
Legal Description:	Lot 1 A Plan 2947, Lot 11 Deeds Plan 27, Pt Lot 13 Deeds Plan 27
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Category 2, Register number 4423
Archaeological Site:	Pre-1900 building, Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	St Paul's Hall and Gymnasium
Key physical dates:	1897: construction (Sydney Street) 1999: building relocated
Architect / Builder:	John Sydney Swan
Former uses:	Schoolroom, church and community hall, Ministry of Works
Current uses:	Schoolroom
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not earthquake prone (SR 163373)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

The Anglican Church's presence in Wellington dates from the arrival of Bishop Selwyn in 1842. The first St Paul's Church was built in 1844. The first St Paul's Schoolroom was built in 1852 from subscriptions collected and a grant of land in Sydney Street from Governor Sir George Grey. Initially, education in New Zealand was pursued by private initiatives or churches, which were encouraged by the government.

The school was opened in January 1852 by Bishop Selwyn. It was a timber framed and clad building with a shingled roof, located at 21-25 Sydney Street East (now Kate Sheppard Place). The demand for education in Wellington was such that within three months there were 83 pupils. The school was also widely used outside school hours by the church and community. In 1895 the original schoolhouse was burnt to the ground. There was considerable debate before it was decided to replace the building. The Anglican Church's diocesan architect Frederick de Jersey Clere's firm Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond were retained to design the new schoolroom, though it was John Swan, then working for the Clere practice, who drafted the actual design.² The schoolroom was built on the same site as the previous school structure. The contract price was £1050 and work was expected to be completed by mid-November 1897; it opened on 23 December 1897. The interior of the schoolroom originally consisted of a central hall with six flanking schoolrooms. The building was relatively well-appointed and there were four fireplaces, six WCs. The adjoining caretaker's accommodation was built soon after.³

The building had new uses - in 1901 it was described as St Paul's Hall and Gymnasium.⁴ Diocesan synod meetings, scout and guide groups, dances and lectures were all held there. There have been suggestions that it was the setting for the Katherine Mansfield short story 'The First Ball'.⁵ It was later used as a rehearsal space by the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

In 1943 a proclamation took the land and schoolroom for public works purposes but it did not take immediate effect.⁶ Although the school closed by 1950, the parish continued to use the hall until the late 1960s.⁷ In 1971 the Ministry of Works took over the building for use as a civil engineering draughting centre⁸ and later as a systems laboratory. At one point the building was expected to be removed for the new High Court but this was built further down Molesworth Street.

A 1996 visit to the building at its previous Kate Sheppard Place address found that the two flanking 'lean-to' 'aisles' had been adapted to form a kitchen, cloakroom and ablution areas, and the hall had been reduced in size with the addition of a mezzanine, and by the removal of the stage.

¹ This section is taken from: Wellington City Council, "119-121 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), HOBS1.

² Original plans and specifications signed by Swan; MS 109/60, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

³ Ibid. The contractors were Isaac Clark and Walter Thompson.

⁴ *Wises Post Office Directory 1901*

⁵ Notes on the history of OSPS by Diocesan Listing and Research Committee convenor Patricia Webb, 1985

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Wises Post Office Directory 1900-1996*

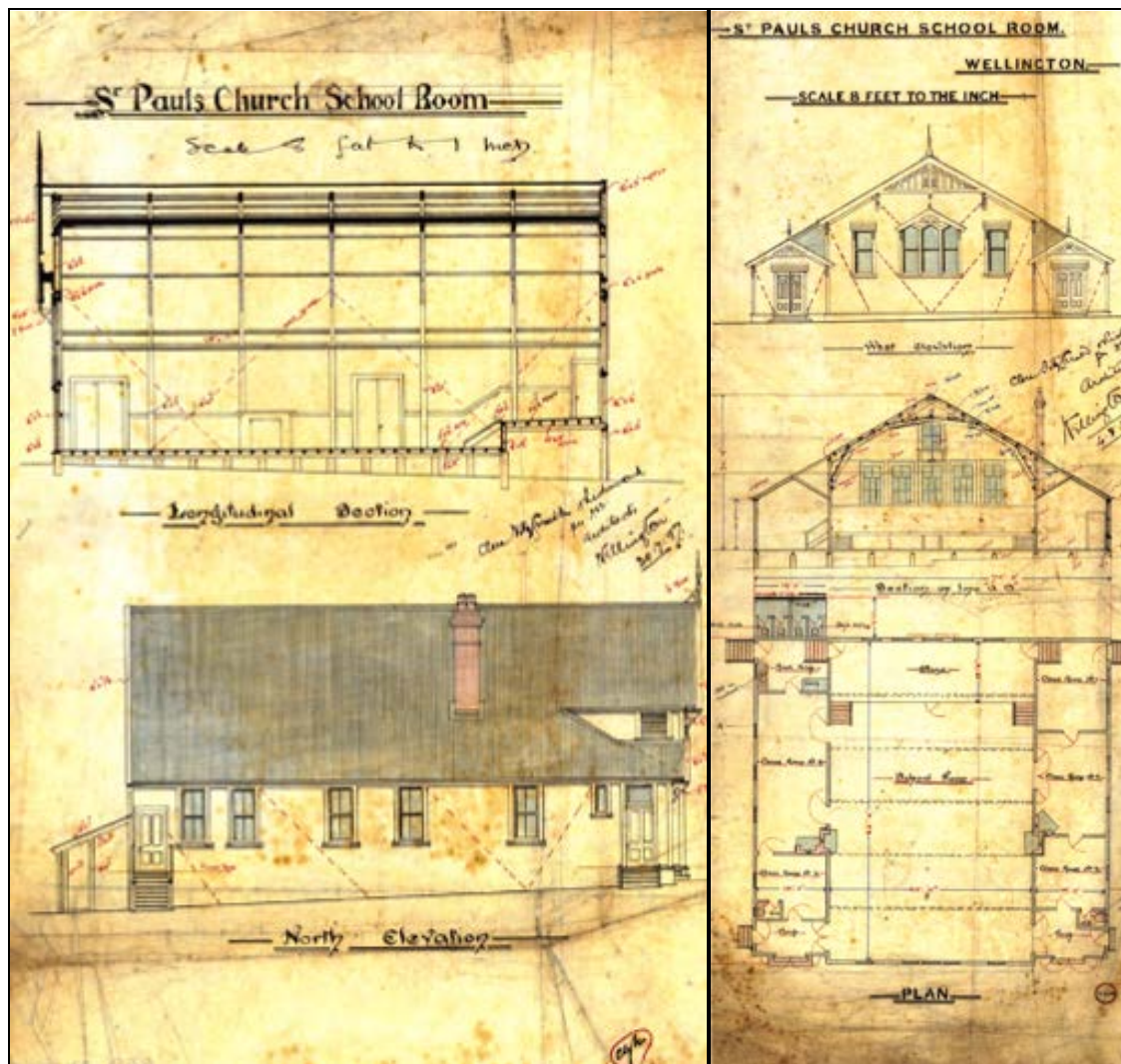
⁸ Ibid.

On its original site in Kate Sheppard Place there was a substantial addition at the back that was the living quarters for the caretaker; this was demolished when the building was relocated to Thorndon School in 1999. The building has been adapted to serve as the Thorndon School Hall and is now in use as a secular educational building.

Old St Paul's Schoolroom's heritage value comes from its extended and varied use over the past 110+ years.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

WCC file 00053:372358



1897	Building constructed
Unknown date – pre 1999	A double height wall erected across the hall. North of this wall an additional storey was incorporated within the original building envelope. Classroom on the west relined. Single storey addition to the west façade. Stage removed.
1999	Caretaker's quarters demolished
1999	Building relocated from 21-25 Kate Shepherd Place to 4-14 Turnbull Street

1.3 Occupation history

1898- late 1960s	Anglican Church School
1971- ?	Ministry of Works
1999-present	Thorndon School

1.4 Architect

John Sydney Swan

Swan (1874-1936) practised architecture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He formed part of the last group of architects to follow the traditional Gothic and Classical styles. He was articled to Frederick de Jersey Clere, working with Clere on many major designs such as the Wellington Rowing Club building (then known as the Naval Artillery Boat Shed, 1894) as well as smaller provincial buildings such as the Church of the Good Shepherd, Tinui. The firm was known as Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond and was one of the most prominent architectural practices in Wellington. From 1901 to 1906 Swan was in partnership with Clere, practising on his own account from 1907. The first major design produced by Swan in this new practice was the Karori Crematorium (1907) which served to establish his architectural identity separate from Clere. During his long and varied career Swan produced a large and wide range of work, including a number of banks for the National Bank such as the head office building in Wellington (1907), educational buildings for the Wellington Technical College with William Gray Young (1922), and a number of major buildings for the Catholic Church including St Gerard's Church, Mt Victoria (1910), Sacred Heart Convent (later Erskine College), Island Bay (1909), and Wanganui Convent (1912). He was an architect of imagination as evidenced by the design of his own house 'The Moorings', Glenbervie Terrace (1905). He designed several commercial buildings, including: 118 Cuba Street (1902), 41-43 Cuba Street (1903), and 34 Molesworth Street – The Backbencher Pub (1912 and 1917).

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Old St Paul's Schoolroom is a symmetrical building with a pitched roof and gabled ends. It was designed in a simple ecclesiastical style derived from the Gothic Revival. The elevation to Murphy Street is a simple gable end with a symmetrical arrangement of tall sash windows, casements and grilles. The main façade faces into the grounds of Thorndon School. On this façade the roof has been cut away to create the illusion of a main gable flanked by a pair of gable ended entrance 'lean-to's'.

This elevation is notable for the ornate timber barge details, finials, window hoods, and for the ornate central window. This window is made up of three sashes (a typical trinity/lancet motif of the Gothic ecclesiastic style) the windows have angled heads and are topped by a decorative gabled window-hood.

The hall ceiling follows the line of the roof over the open timber trusses. Heavy members run down the interior of the end walls, and these decorative elements act as wind-bracing. The ceilings of the lean-tos are match-lined to form a double pitch tent-like space. The original cast iron wall vents in the hall between the trusses vent into the roof void created by the lean-to ceilings.

2.2 Materials

- Timber frame, piles, and rusticated weatherboard cladding
- The timbers used include 'heart totara, heart matai, heart and ordinary board rimu.'⁹
- Corrugated iron roof

With the exception of the stage in the hall most of the original structure remains.

2.3 Setting

The historic significance of this building is derived principally from its construction and long use by the Anglican Church. The building, the second schoolroom associated with Old St Paul's, is now over 110 years old and has been used for many church and community activities giving it a social significance complementary to that of its parent church. Following removal from its original site in Kate Sheppard Place in 1999, where it had stood for over 100 years, it is now serves as an additional building again in a secular setting, this time at Thorndon Quay.

Sources

'Hopes Held for Restoring Hall to Local Community Use'. In Cathedral News.
.Published by the Dean and Vestry of Wellington Cathedral, August 1984.

Barton, PL. "Proposal for Classification. Buildings Classification Committee Report, 'Old St Paul's Schoolroom'". 20 July 1987.

Evening Post. 'Opening of St Paul's School room'. 24 December 1897, p.5.

MacMorran, George. *Some Schools and Schoolmasters of Early Wellington*.
Wellington: S and W Mackay, 1900

Wellington City Council. 'Wellington City Council Heritage Building Inventory 2001 - Appendix III, Wellington Architects'.

_____. '19B Hobson Crescent – Old St Paul's Schoolroom'. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

_____. 'Old St Paul's Schoolroom – 21-25 Kate Shepherd Place'. Heritage Building Inventory 1995.

⁹ Historic Places Trust, 'Old St Pauls Schoolroom [Relocated]', last accessed 22 April 2013 at <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=4423>

Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The Old St Paul's Schoolroom is a fine example of a 19th century timber Gothic ecclesiastic/school building. The exterior is notable for its simple overall form and for its decorative north façade, and the interior is notable for its fine timber 'stepped-vault' ceiling.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The building is visually interesting – the architecture is attractive and it is brightly painted. Its role as a landmark is lessened by its relocation almost fifteen years ago.

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

This building has group value for its association with Old St Paul's Church (1865-66 - WCC ref 18/221) its parent church, and the former Anglican bishop's residence Bishop's Court (1879 – WCC ref 18/223) – both on nearby Mulgrave Street.

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The historic significance of this building is derived principally from its construction and long use by the Anglican Church.

The building was designed by John Swan for the notable Wellington architectural practice of Clere, Fitzgerald and Richmond.

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The schoolroom also has historic value for its association with the development of the education system in New Zealand.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

This is a pre-1900 building, however it was moved off its original site in 1999.

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site, reference NZAA R27/270.

Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

The schoolroom is of technical interest given the high degree of remaining original materials and building fabric.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

The building, the second schoolroom associated with Old St Paul's, is now over 110 years old and has been used for many church and community activities giving it a social significance complementary to that of its parent church.

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

The schoolroom is a focus of community identity for Thorndon, particularly for Thorndon School. Though it has been relocated from its original site, the building provides a valuable sense of continuity through its sustained use since its construction to the present day by Thorndon residents.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The schoolroom is a focus of connection to early Thorndon education and community activities.

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

The schoolroom is a rare survivor of a Victorian schoolroom in Wellington.

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

The building has representative value as a remarkably complete example of a Victorian schoolroom/church hall.

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

A large amount of the original fabric remains, giving the building a very high level of authenticity.

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

Old St Paul's schoolroom is important at a local level.

3.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file		File missing
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		File missing
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	N	
HPT website	N	
HPT files	N	
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		File missing

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*