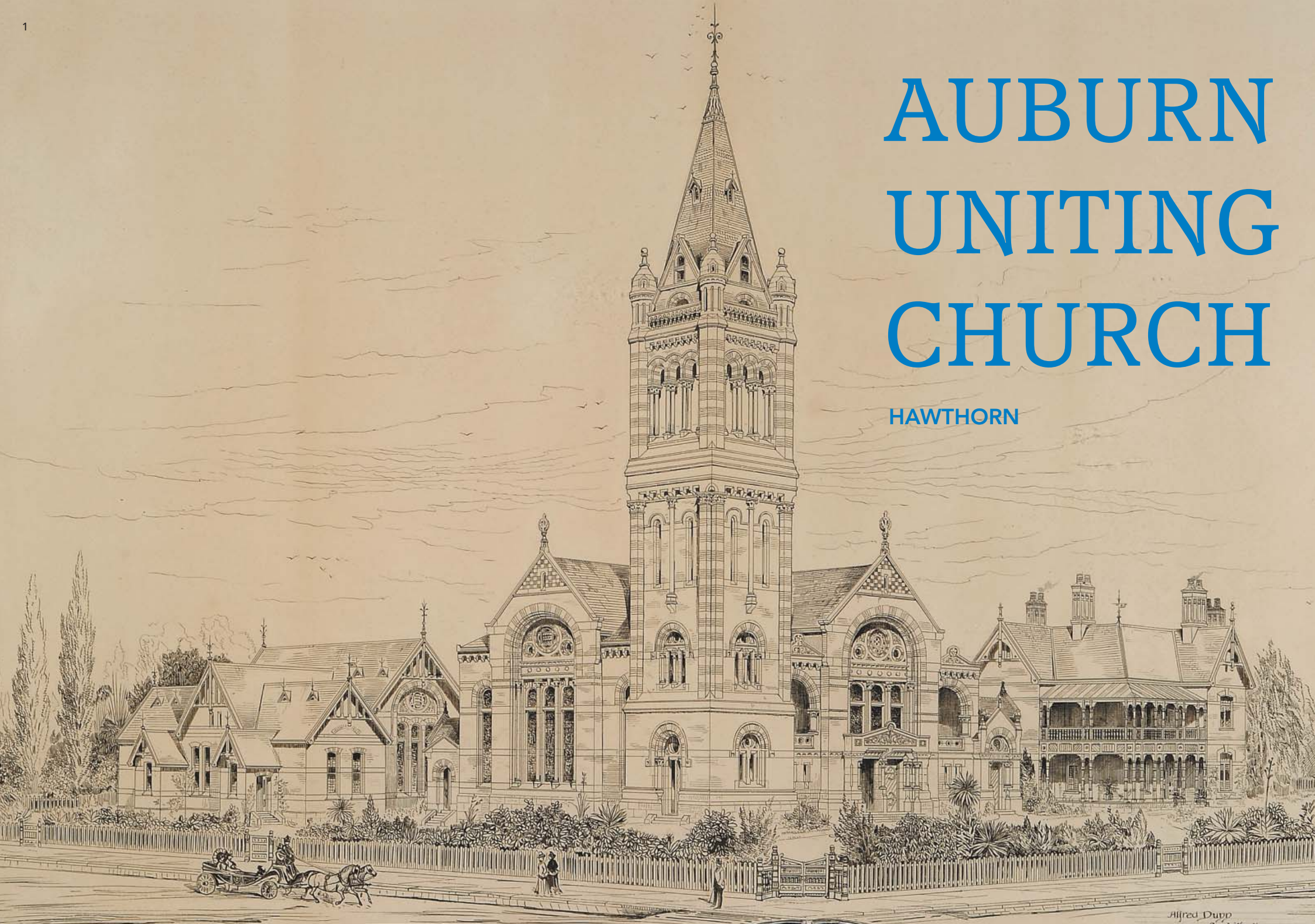


AUBURN UNITING CHURCH

HAWTHORN



AUBURN UNITING CHURCH
VICTORIAN HERITAGE
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OR BY APPOINTMENT

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The Auburn Uniting Church complex as a whole is remarkably intact and thus a monument to the social affluence and optimism of the later 1880s.

The Auburn Uniting Church complex consists of a main church building, a church hall, parsonage, caretaker's cottage, former stables, and a former infants school. However, it was the church itself which became the symbol of Wesleyan Methodism's affluence in Victoria.

Constructed on a hill, it became a prominent local landmark and is one of the finest examples of Lombardic Romanesque church design in Australia. It is unusual as an example of a complete, intact and little altered set of church buildings built simultaneously to one design.

Wesleyan Methodism was one of the flourishing denominations of the Hawthorn municipality in the second half of the 19th century. The local Methodist community was known as the "Hawthorn Circuit" and such was its influence that it was responsible for the establishment in 1881 of the Methodist Ladies' College (MLC).

Between the 1840s and 1880s the Hawthorn Circuit occupied and subsequently outgrew a number of buildings until in 1886 a new, considerably larger, site was selected on the corner of Oxley Road and Hepburn Street.

The Trustees advertised in the *Argus*, inviting "competitive designs for church, school and parsonage" on the new site. The successful design was submitted by the talented young Melbourne architect Alfred Dunn, who designed a number of churches for the Wesleyans. Once begun, the entire complex took less than two years to construct and was completed in 1890.

Alfred Dunn commenced a promising career in architecture in his early twenties, rapidly gaining a reputation for imaginative designs, especially in his ecclesiastical work. Dunn achieved most of his appointments through entering design competitions and contests for

building projects. It was through this process that he produced designs for the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Hawthorn; he was also co-winner for the design of the acclaimed interiors of the (former) Commercial Bank of Australia Banking Chambers in 1893, a collaboration between himself and Lloyd Tayler. Dunn's career was cut short by his tragic death in 1894, at the early age of 29, from tuberculosis.

In 1902 the Wesleyan Methodists became part of the Methodist Church in Australia, which in turn combined with the Congregationalists and Presbyterians in 1977 to become the Uniting Church in Australia. Since that date the church has been known as the Auburn Uniting Church.

ARCHITECTURE

The church building is constructed in the Lombardic Romanesque style. The predominant theme is the use of banded, dichromatic brickwork of Hawthorn browns contrasted with deep reds. The dominant element of the church is its multi-levelled tower.

The church building follows a general cruciform plan, broken by the prominent corner tower. The tower rises in five main stages from a stone plinth.

The church is two storeys high with prominent gables facing each of the main street elevations with balconies denoting the first floor. The main entry on Oxley Road is a central colonnaded entryway supporting a decorated stucco pediment below the main gabled facade. Above the pediment is a decorative archway, featuring an arcade on the lower level and three circular recesses on the upper, above which the arch is accented by typical red and brown brickwork.

The parsonage, hall and cottage are architecturally complementary to the church building, similarly employing banded dichromatic brickwork on basalt plinths with slate roofs. The hall is a substantial building with separate entrances for boys and girls and



a central stage with radiating classrooms and sliding dividing doors.

The Auburn Uniting Church is believed to be rare in that it contains a complete, intact and authentic set of church buildings that were built simultaneously (within 18 to 24 months of each other), whereas, historically, most such complexes have been constructed over long periods of time, evolving with the congregation's needs.

THE ORGAN

The historic organ was built and installed in the church for its opening in 1889 by the Melbourne firm of Fincham and Hobday. It is one of the larger Fincham organs of the late 19th century still in its original location in Melbourne. The case was designed by the church's architect rather than the organ builder. It is a fine example of Victorian craftsmanship. The organ originally had two manuals and 20 stops and has been enlarged three times, most recently in 1967.

The organ is in regular use and may be heard every Sunday morning between 9.30 and 10.30am and several times a year at concerts.

For visitors interested in learning more about the organ, a leaflet, *Notes on the organ*, containing the original specification, is available in the church narthex and may be found on the church website.

POINTS OF HISTORIC INTEREST

Just a few of the many interesting features which you can see at Auburn Uniting Church include:

Tower

The tower's open observation deck offers panoramic views from the city to the Dandenongs and is open to the public from time to time.

Hydraulic engine

A hydraulic engine used to power the organ from 1889 until it was replaced by an electric motor in about 1922 is on display in the church

narthex. Very few examples of a hydraulic engine used to power an organ blower are in existence.

Pews

As well as being an architect, Alfred Dunn was renowned as a furniture designer and it is almost certain that he designed the pews and other original furniture in the Church, himself.

The laying of the Foundation Stone

A photo of the laying of the Foundation Stone in July 1888 may be seen in the Minister's Vestry. The stone itself is at the base of the Tower.

Stained glass windows

The Cato Memorial Windows in the east wall were unveiled in 1937 in memory of the philanthropist Frederick John Cato, a leading layman at Auburn for many years.

The Centenary Windows in the west wall were the gift of Mr W E Whitehead to celebrate the centenary of Methodism in 1935 and to commemorate the work of the Victoria Home Missions and the Methodist Inland Mission.

Both windows are the work of William Wheildon who carried out many ecclesiastical commissions for the Melbourne branch of Brooks Robinson & Co.

More information is available in the leaflet, *Notes for a self-guided tour of Auburn Uniting Church*, available in the church narthex.

The church is still a functioning parish church of the Uniting Church in Australia, Hawthorn Parish. Contact the church office for enquiries regarding baptism, marriage or funeral services.

IMAGE CAPTIONS

1. ALFRED DUNN'S RENDERING OF HIS WINNING DESIGN FOR THE HAWTHORN WESLEYAN CHURCH
2. THE CHURCH TOWER SHOWING THE BANDED DICHROMATIC BRICKWORK
3. DETAIL OF THE CATO MEMORIAL WINDOWS
4. DETAIL OF THE ARCHED BRICKWORK
5. THE HISTORIC FINCHAM ORGAN
6. THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE, JULY 1888. ARCHITECT ALFRED DUNN IS CIRCLED.

"...there is no place where a man stands so much upon his merit as Australia. He has only to demonstrate his ability and above all his integrity to secure public confidence, and his youth will not mar his prospects. That is the reason of my success."

ALFRED DUNN AS QUOTED IN THE MALVERN ARGUS 1892

Dunn's complex is unique in that it was constructed at the one time, by the one builder, to the design of the one architect, using consistent materials of the finest quality.

