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**Name:** Penguin Uniting Church and Hall (former Methodist Church and School)  
**Status:** Permanently Registered  
**Tier:** State  
State  
State

**THR ID Number:** 721  
**Municipality:** Central Coast Council  
**Date Listed:** 14/09/2007

**Location Addresses**

50 MAIN RD, PENGUIN 7316 TAS

**Title References**

39985/10

**Property Id**

7728424



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Untitled

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**Setting:** The Uniting Church (former Methodist Church) located on land at 50 Main Rd Penguin is the most prominent and iconic building in Penguin. It is a clearly distinguishable landmark from various vantage points in the town. It is an important element in the streetscape and skyline of Penguin from all views. As the tallest building in Penguin, it is a pivotal landmark of the town. The church is set back from the street with surrounding lawns. It is located on a strip of land between the Main Rd and the railway along Crescent Street. The building facing north, has uninterrupted views across the Esplanade to Bass Strait and from the south overlooks Hiscutt Park. Adjacent to the church is a substantial Church Hall. At the rear of the hall is a small modern concrete block amenities building. A large Norfolk Pine is located on the north eastern corner of the block on the Main Rd. There is no known cemetery associated specifically with the church on this land although there is a historical link with the Penguin Cemetery located at the north western end of the town.

**Description:** The Uniting Church (former Methodist Church) at 50 Main Rd. Penguin is a Federation Carpenter Gothic style church building. It is a prominent painted weatherboard church with a primary steeply-pitched roof. There is a timber steeple with a fine timber framed spire rising from a square tower. The building has complex massing of porch, nave, transepts, apse, vestries and tower with multiple gables of varying sizes, heights and orientations. Details of interest include ornamental gable screens patterned on a rising sun motif, scalloped barges, keyhole form windows, a circular 'west' window with a simple spoked traced pattern of timber and rounded transom windows which replicate the detailing of the circular window. The internal arrangement of the church is traditional comprising, aisles, nave, chancel, vestry and sanctuary. Built of timber for economy this building demonstrates what Apperley et al describe as characteristic of the Federation Carpenter style: "great use of timber, demonstrating how the tradesman used, connected, expressed and embellished the various timber components of the building drawing on shapes and patterns reminiscent of the contrived Victorian Academic Gothic, Victorian Free Gothic and Federation Gothic styles". (Apperley et al: pp.124-127). The timber detailing is also a feature of the interior including an unpainted timberlined vaulted ceiling, extensive blackwood carving and ornamental fretwork on the banisters with a recurring trefoil motif cut-out. Other furnishing with timber carving includes hymn boards, lectern, baptismal, cupboards, and prayer boards. A staircase with lead coated steps leads to balcony known as the 'gallery'. The floors are made of Tasmanian Oak. The interior mezzanine level with balcony is held by a cast iron Corinthian-styled central column. This is a substantial sloping platform that overlooks the chancel. Remnants of gas fittings are evident on various walls. One change to the format of the interior is that the pulpit has been removed from the centre to the side to allow a section of floor space to be utilised for a

children's area.

The Hall adjacent to the church is a utilitarian timber building with simple narrow barge boards and finials as its only decorations on a T-shaped gable corrugated iron roof. The building has been used for various community uses over time that include school, Sunday School, library and general public community hall. It has a number of unsympathetic additions which detract from its integrity but most of the original fabric survives. The interior is timber-clad and includes several rooms, vaulted ceilings and long narrow windows in the original section of the building.

#### History:

The land known as 50 Main Rd Penguin was first granted to Lewis Grant of the Don who subsequently gifted the land to the community of Primitive Methodists. Title holders included David Good, Francis Groom, James Yaxley, Jacob Barker, Charles Ling, William Barnes, George P Fielding, William R Kidd, and Frank H Fielding. A further forty-nine acres were purchased between Deviation Rd and Mission Hill Rd, for the new Mission House from Mr Russell for the Rev WH Walton to set up headquarters at Penguin for the North West Coast Circuit that also included Waratah on the west coast (Tas Methodism 1820-1975 LSC Pamphlet: p.76). The bottom portion of this land at the north western end of the town was later gifted to the community by Rev Walton for the Penguin Cemetery (THR 10918). The Methodist parsonage located on land now known as Panton Court and was destroyed by fire in 1979 (Advocate 17 /9/1979).

Early history of the Methodists and the original church.

Primitive Methodist Church services and Sunday Schools began in the Penguin district in c1864 and were initially held in private homes such as a small house on South Rd and a hut used for the school. On the 14th January 1866 a Primitive Methodist Church was opened on the site of 50 Main Rd Penguin. It was a simple building constructed of split palings from a nearby tree and was erected for the cost of 69 pounds (Barker:p.16). From 1867-1871 the North West Coast Mission was controlled by the British Primitive Methodist Missionary Society and later by the Melbourne District. It was not until 1885 that Penguin was finally independent (TasMethodist 1820-1975 LSC Pamphlet: p.76). Up until 1881 Penguin was one of four designated areas that included Hobart, Launceston and Longford.

The first service, attended by 70 adults and many children was conducted in 1866 by Rev Long, and was followed by a tea meeting on the Monday. (Primitive Methodist Miscellany Vol II No III April 1866 W.H.Walton in the Advertiser 18 /5/1956). By 1915 in the Jubilee year there were 115 church members, 75 Juniors and 170 Sunday School Scholars.

The Rev William H Walton, a Primitive Methodist, began his ministry in England in 1859 and arrived in Tasmania in 1863. In 1867 he travelled to the north west coast preaching at Penguin, North Motton, Leven and Emu Bay (Barnes:p.13) In 1867 he was appointed to the North West Coast mission with headquarters in Penguin (Tas Methodist 1820-1975: p.76.).

In the early days the building was used jointly by the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists (also known as the United Methodist Free Church). In 1870 these two groups split and the Primitive Methodists built another church on Mission Hill (since demolished). The break-away Primitive Methodist Church was located on the Main Rd on the southern side between Deviation Rd and Mission Hill Rd (formerly Pine Rd) at the base of Mission Hill (now the site of 2 units 2007). Later, it was possibly relocated to the site at 50 Main Rd adjacent to the Methodist Church, for use as a hall and library, and was burnt down in 1904. Prior to the current church building at 50 Main Rd being constructed, the original split paling church was relocated by using block and tackle with a rope around the building fastened to a tree. Later, in 1904, it was destroyed by fire.

(Penguin Uniting Church 1903-2003).

New Methodist Church at 50 Main Rd Penguin.

In 1901 the two bodies reunited as the United Methodist Societies (Advocate 18/5/1956) and it was decided to construct a new church at 50

Main Rd on the site of the original building. Francis Groom and Richard Kenner were initially employed as the builders but another source refers to MacFarlane (from Melbourne) as the building contractor. The architect was

William Henry Morris, a well-known north-west builder and architect. The building was constructed for the sum of 1,100 pounds. Many of the congregation assisted with the building of the church. Upon completion the building was dedicated. Rev M Lawther conducted the first Prayer Meeting at sunrise on 10th May 1903. Rev BW Heath (Chairman of the District) preached later on the day at 11am and Mr Basil Archer conducted another of the services at 3pm attended by 600 people. Rev BW Heath conducted a final service at 7pm (NW Advertiser 9/5/1903 & Minutes of the Trustees). Revs WH Bowe and TB Reed also attended (Recorder & Methodist Extract 1902, p.535). The Foundation Stone was laid by Jacob Barker on the 20th August 1902. (Penguin Uniting Church 1903-2003). Although initially fitted with gas the church and school were connected to electricity in 1924 (Minutes of the Trustees). In 1982 the church was re-roofed by voluntary workers supervised by Des Cox.

Uniting Church.

In 1977 the Methodist Church, Presbyterian and Congregational churches amalgamated nationally to form the Uniting Church in Australia. As there were no Congregational or Presbyterian Churches in Penguin, the church, without any additional changes to the congregation or building, was renamed the Penguin Uniting Church. Activities associated with the church include the Kids of the Uniting Church in Australia Club, Youth Groups, Parents & Friends Association and various Adult Fellowship groups and activities such as the Womens Auxiliary for Overseas Missions Guild, Church Choir, Spring Fairs and Christmas Parades.

Combined services were held under the auspices of the Inter Church Council that incorporates the Catholic,

Anglican, Baptist and Christian Reform Uniting Churches. In 2007 the congregation of the Uniting Church numbered approximately 70 adults. The church is a popular choice for many weddings, and celebrates Harvest Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, as well as a weekly service.

Ministers.

Throughout its history various ministers and probationers have been associated with the Churches and hall including: Revs J Long; WH Walton; Mathieson; SM Lawther; WT Abbott; E Tonkin; JC Freeman; H Yeo; LS Macdougall; S Churchward; J F Butler; FH Metcalfe; DJ Flockart; JH Brown; WH Brown; H Robinson; J Langham; J Oglethorpe; W Ryde; W Harris; JT Piercey; JR Lynch; S Richards; T J Pithouse; T Cameron; J Rogers; C Mason; Dowling; LE Barnard; WJ Wilson; NH Pask; MH Fletcher; CJ Dodd; AK Wilhelms; Neil H Webb; SJ Asplin; GT Heyward; IH Palfreyman; JA Gault; D Porteous; CE Chapman; JC Legg; WH Bowe; JT Payne; W Hamilton; CJ Trott; K Esterbrook; KG Blackwell; Paster R Hall; P Cotterell; P Chalston; Helen Gaulke; Adelene Mills and P Weekes. (PHG List 2007).

School House and Sunday School Hall.

During the time that Rev Walton was stationed at Penguin, his sister-in-law Miss Neligan conducted a private school from the church at 50 Main Rd Penguin (Barker:p.19). The school closed upon her marriage and her subsequent relocation to Emu Bay. Later Miss Paton (sister to Mrs Clerke), who arrived in the district with the Clerke Family, reopened the school. Later a split timber school house was built in the church grounds by voluntary labour (Barker:p.19). This school operated until 1879. The first meeting of the new Trust was held in the Schoolroom on April 7th 1903 and continued to be held on this site until 1924. (Minutes of Trustees Meetings of the Primitive Methodist and United Methodist Free Church , Penguin). In 1904 the Methodist Sunday School Hall and Library (also known as the lower chapel) was demolished after fire damage (Advocate 29/11/1904). The new adjacent church was saved through voluntary local efforts. In 1905 a new Sunday School Hall in the shape of a T designed by a local builder and Church Trustee, Mr C Ling and constructed by Mr C Monson, a local builder was opened on the same site (Advocate 22/7/1905 & Minutes of the Trustees). The building was also used for social events such as lantern entertainment (Minutes of the Trustees (1909)). Extensions were completed in 1915 by voluntary labour (Penguin Uniting Church 1903-2003: p.3). In 1916 Jubilee celebrations were held in the School Hall. In 1956 the building known as the Kindergarten of the Methodist Sunday School was extended (Advocate 18/5/1956). A classroom was added in 1959, and painting completed in 1966 with more additions in 1986. The modern concrete block toilet facilities were built in 1987. There was a recent hall addition in 1990 (CCC Building Records Permit 38-589 Class room 5/1/1959; Permit 90-86 Additions 9/10/1986; Permit 83-87 Amenities 11/11/1987, and Permit 93-90 Hall Addition 19/7/1990).

The first Superintendent of the Sunday School was Percy Fielding with Miss Fielding first superintendent of the Cradle Roll. She was succeeded by Miss Nellie Lette. Many of the congregation of the church participated in both World Wars and the Honour rolls on the walls document the local names . Miss Lette on behalf of the Penguin Christian Endeavour Society supported troops abroad. The local newspaper in c1915 reported other local residents who had maintained long service to the School including W Belbin (60 years), C K Ling (50 Years), and WR Kidd (45 years) (Penguin Uniting Church 1903-2003: p.8). Anniversary days were a popular annual event.

Architect.

William Henry Morris, architect, master builder, wood carver and furniture maker and undertaker in the north west of Tasmania was born at Barrington in 1862 and died in 1942, aged 81 years. He married Rhoda Elizabeth Ann Cooper at Port Sorell in 1887. She was born in 1862 at Cluan near Westbury and her family were pioneers at Barrington. William and Rhoda had a family of three sons: William Charles Carl Morris, OBE, b. 1888, (later well-known Principle of Launceston, Devonport and Scottsdale High schools) Cecil Reginald Morris, MBE, b.1889 (composer of Tasmania Calls and Launceston City organist, local Councillor of Sheffield Municipality) and Oriel Vere Morris, CM, b.1894 (Bank Manager, Commercial Bank of Australia in various capital cities). WH Morris lived most of his life in the north-west of Tasmania residing at Barrington, Ulverstone and Penguin. The family were staunch Baptists. He built many residences such as Natone (now Tanglewood 10-82-97 THC) and is particularly known for his designs and or building of rural churches that included the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic Church (Clerk of Works), Gospel Hall and Municipal Hall at Sheffield, Paradise Baptist Church, Methodist Church at Ulverstone and the Penguin Methodist Church. He built the Town Hall in Sheffield and in 1887 he built a chemist and druggist shop with consulting rooms and a large family hotel for Capt JB Taylor at Penguin and the hall for the Leven Lodge of the Independent Order of Fellows in Ulverstone. He spent some time in NZ in the Waihi area where he was appointed in charge of the mine managers residence and numerous other buildings (WC Morris: p.9). Later on his return to Tasmania, the family resettled in Sheffield, and their family home was named 'Paeroa' after the New Zealand river port. Another house built for his son Carl in Sheffield was named 'Loyeta'. In his retirement he continued with his passion for crafting marquetry tables. Examples of his furniture were displayed at London House in England and have since been lodged with the QVMAG. He also became the local undertaker at Sheffield.

**Statement of Significance:**  
(non-statutory summary)

The Penguin Uniting Church and Hall at 50 Main Rd Penguin are of historic heritage significance because of their associations with the general community as religious and townscape landmarks. The church is of historic heritage significance because of its ability to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a Federation Carpenter Gothic church building but paradoxically is unique in its complex form and distinctive key-hole stained glass windows. The church is an outstanding example of William Henry Morris architectural legacy in the north-west of Tasmania.

## Significance:

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

**a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.**

The Penguin Uniting Church and hall are of historic cultural heritage significance as important elements in demonstrating the evolutionary pattern of the Central Coast district. Established in the 1860s, the former Primitive Methodists, Wesleyans and now the Uniting Church presence on this site is an historical record of Penguin's religious life demonstrating aspects of the community's development and growth. Many of the town's notable early settlers and several prominent individuals associated with religious and educational life in Tasmania are associated with this site and their descendants (of three generations) continue to worship within this church. WH Morris, the architect was an influential architect and builder in the region.

**b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.**

The Penguin Uniting Church is a rare example of a large rural timber church with a high spire and unusual key-hole shaped windows in the style of Federation Carpenter Gothic. It is the only example of its kind in Tasmania with such complex forms and distinctive windows.

**c) The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.**

**d) The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**

The Uniting Church (former Methodist Church) at 50 Main Rd. Penguin is of historic heritage significance because of its ability to demonstrate to a high degree the principal characteristics of a Federation Carpenter Gothic church building. These characteristics are found in the external form, construction methods and detailing such as the weatherboard cladding, steep pitched corrugated iron roof, front porch, decorative projecting gables, pointed arch motifs above the doorways, prominent roof vents on the tower and spire, porches. Traditional church arrangements include aisles, nave, chancel, vestry and sanctuary.

The adjacent hall is an example of a rural Federation vernacular timber hall.

**e) The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**

The interior of the church features examples of William Henry Morris's carving such as the hand rail on the gallery. The key hole shaped stained glass windows are a very distinctive and unique feature of the church. The church has a high level of integrity both externally and internally, including church fixtures and furniture.

**f) The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

The Penguin Uniting Church and Hall are of historic cultural heritage significance to the community because they demonstrate aspects of twentieth century evangelism and philanthropy and form a prominent landmark within the town of Penguin overlooking the public esplanade and Hiscutt Park. This building is of historic heritage significance because of its associations with the general community as a religious and townscape landmark. The church, hall and site of previous buildings have provided a place of worship and congregation for early settlers and their subsequent descendants for almost 150 years. It has featured in various publications, Tourist advertisements and publications, and images are held in many local state and national collections. The Hall has been used as a private school, Sunday School and for various community group events over the years. It now houses Honour Rolls from nearby districts and continues to be used by the general Penguin community.

**g) The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

The Church and hall has associations with early pioneering families of the Penguin District with several generations being members of the congregation. The current congregation is approximately 70 members on a weekly basis. The Architect of the Church was William Henry Morris who was described in his Obituary in 1942 as 'one of the best known residents of the North-west...as a citizen, architect and builder he was highly esteemed'. Morris is well known across the North-west region for his church and public building designs. Rev Walton and Long, two pioneering ministers within the Primitive Methodist Church are commemorated in street names in Penguin and feature in Methodist histories.

**h) The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

**PLEASE NOTE** This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.