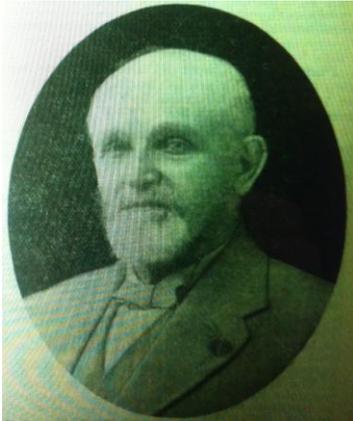


## Memorial Windows of Camberwell Uniting (Methodist) Church

### Robert Smith

#### ❖ Preamble



Having such a common surname, a search for details of Robert Smith requires patience.

However, I am now certain that the Robert Smith pictured at left and featured below was born on 1 November 1854, in Yorkshire, England, and died on 6 October 1934 in Epworth Hospital, Richmond, aged 80 years.

#### ❖ Family

In between the above dates, Robert married Sarah Elizabeth Williamson on 30 May 1881 at the bride's family residence in Sandon, Victoria (a small town about 30 kms north of Daylesford and 60 kms west of Kyneton). They proceeded to have 7 children over the next 12 years.

According to the records, the children were Mary, (born 3/4/1882), Ada (b. 25/6/1883), Annie (b. 6/7/1885), Rosa (b. 26/2/1887), Frank (b. 27/3/1889), Mildred (b. 3/6/1891), and Robert (b. 16/12/1894). More will be said of the children later.

#### ❖ Life Celebration

On 30 May 1931, Mr and Mrs. Smith, of Inglesby Road, Camberwell (just one street behind the Church), celebrated their Golden Wedding at their residence.

The Methodist "*Spectator*" subsequently reported that "*Mr Smith, who is of the old-fashioned, sterling Methodist type, came from Yorkshire to Victoria in his early manhood, when he immediately associated himself with our people, and where he met and afterwards married Miss E. Williamson, a lady of great kindness of heart, daughter of one of our well-known families of Sandon.*"

*Mr Smith, who is a merchant in Melbourne, has been through a long number of years held in high esteem for his integrity and quiet charity, while in church life, wherever located, he, with his dear partner has been much regarded and appreciated for constant fervency in prayer and devoted service.*

*Their large family of children, together with a number of their oldest friends, gathered at a very happy and richly laden wedding breakfast.*

*Appropriate toasts were proposed by the Rev. J. H. Cain, C. Thomas, and F Jennings, which were duly honoured, and felicitous words were spoken by members of the family, all of whom rise up to call their parents 'Blessed.'*

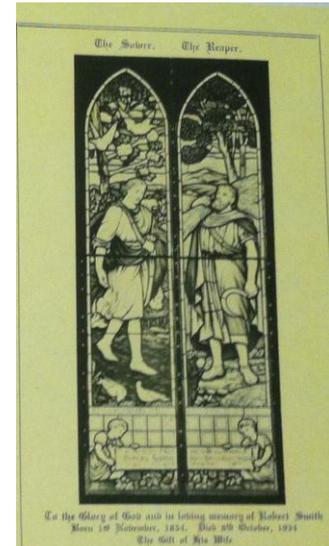
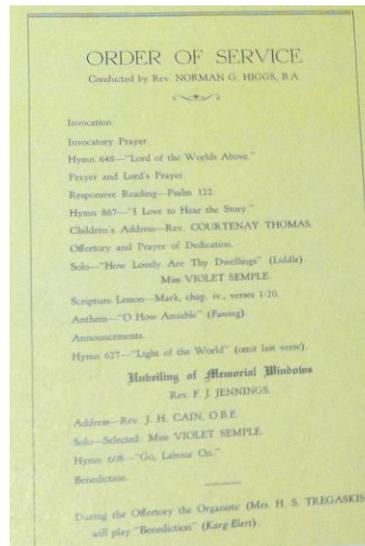
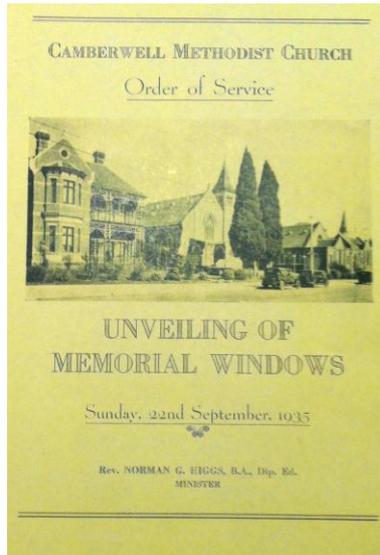
*The best wishes of a wide circle of friends are extended to Mr and Mrs Smith, with prayer that they may be long spared and enriched with good health and heavenly grace."*

Sadly, Mr Smith was to live only another 3 years, dying in October 1934.

## ❖ *Unveiling of Memorial Windows*

Nearly a year later, on 21 September 1935, *"The Age"* and *"The Argus"* reported that *"Two memorial windows, the gift of Mrs Smith, in memory of the late Mr Robert Smith, a local preacher for more than 50 years, will be unveiled at Camberwell Methodist Church tomorrow morning. (Sunday 22 September). Rev J H Cain will preach."*

The formal Order of Service was as follows:



Accompanying the Order of Service for the Unveiling of the Memorial Windows was the following outline of Mr Smith's contribution to the life of our church:

*"Robert Smith came to reside in the Hawthorn Circuit in 1921, and attended Auburn Church, where for some years he was a class leader.*

*When he took up his residence in Camberwell, he became a devoted member of the Camberwell congregation. He was especially interested in the welfare of the young people of the church.*

*He was elected a Trustee, and took an active part in the beautification of the church grounds.*

*Mr Smith was a local preacher for over 50 years. He was generous of heart and beloved by all."*

The above information is helpful as it allows us to ascertain that, from being born in 1854 and arriving in the Hawthorn Circuit in 1921, he was already 67 years old. He was several years older when he arrived at Camberwell, and it would seem he joined our Church as a member of the congregation, who was able to use his extensive life experience to look after the welfare of younger people, as well as to actively contribute to the enhancement of the Church environment and amenity.

It does seem quite an honour that after spending only some 10 of his 80 years in Camberwell, after some 50 years preaching in the Brighton circuit, the Camberwell Methodist Church was chosen to display a lasting memorial to Mr Smith's life and work.

❖ **The Memorial Windows**

Mr Smith is the only person whose life is celebrated with two windows in our Church, and they are located on the left hand side as you enter the church, almost behind the organ. The people who get the best view are our 'power point' team.

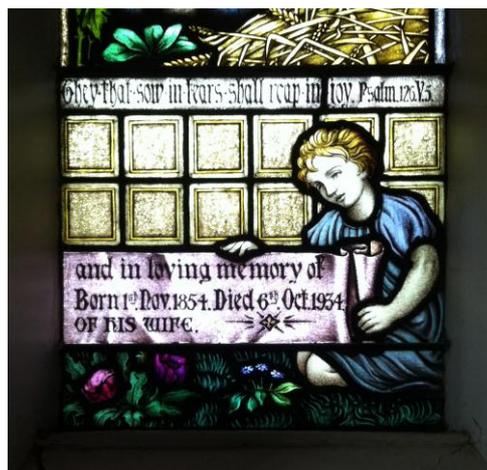


The pictures represent, respectively, The Sower and The Reaper.

The text beneath the picture of 'The Sower' reads *"Behold a sower went forth to sow" from Matt 13, v3.*

The text below 'The Reaper' reads *"They that sow in fear shall reap in joy" from Psalm 126 v5.*

Within the window, below the Sower and the Reaper, the dedication reads *"To the Glory of God and in loving memory of Robert Smith. Born 1<sup>st</sup> November 1854. Died 6<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1934. The Gift of his Wife."*



❖ **Death – and a mystery**

In October 1934, newspapers reported that *"much regret will be felt at the death, on Saturday last, of Mr Robert Smith, of Inglesby Road, Camberwell. Mr Smith was greatly respected as a Christian, and has been an ardent Sunday School worker for over 50 years in the Brighton Circuit, and at Barker's Road and Camberwell in the Hawthorn Circuit. At Camberwell he was a valued Trustee, and was convener of the church Garden Committee. Much sympathy is expressed for the wife and family."*

On Monday 8 October 1934, "The Age" provided more detail when it reported that "on the 6<sup>th</sup> October, Robert Smith, of Sandon, 35 Inglesby Road, Camberwell,..... the beloved husband of Sarah Elizabeth, and loving father of Mary, Ada, Annie, Rose, Frank, and Mildred, died in his 80th year. A life lived for others."

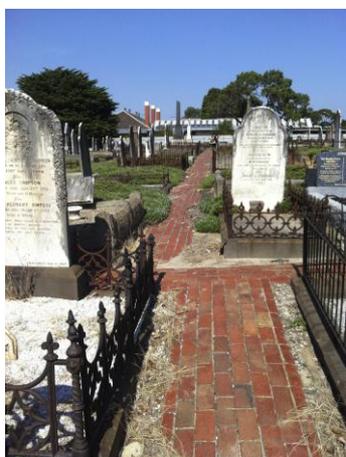
Aside from Rosa being misspelt as Rose (perhaps she preferred to be called that), only 6 children were listed. What became of Robert?

### ❖ Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (part 1)

Mr Smith's funeral was held at Camberwell Methodist Church and he was buried in the Methodist Section of the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (as per below, in Row E).



A visit to an older cemetery (outside of attending a funeral or visiting a loved one) is an interesting experience. There is the broad organisation (by religious groupings, military areas, family plots, grand mausoleums and feature walls for those cremated), the sometimes higgledy-piggledy, uneven walkways that one uses to totter along while trying to follow a map reference, and the varying degrees of care taken of the different grave sites – those of the known, the unknown, the remembered, and the sadly neglected.



Your correspondent visited the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, and it was a moving experience. It is an old cemetery – in fact it is effectively filled to capacity. There is a second Cheltenham Memorial Cemetery a few kilometres away on some reclaimed flat industrial land, which is already steadily filling up.

The picture at left is the path to the Smith gravesite. In the background is Cheltenham Primary School, which was another reason for me to visit the cemetery. It is the subject of comment later in this article.

### ❖ Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery (part 2), and a mystery solved

My trip to the cemetery proved illuminating and worthwhile.

Below is Robert Smith's gravesite. It turns out to be a SMITH family site, as pictured below.....



....and the plaques on the family grave tell the story:

- Robert Smith is buried with his wife Sarah.
- His 4<sup>th</sup> daughter Rosa is buried alongside her youngest brother Robert, who, based on subsequent searching, was born at the end of 1894, and unfortunately lived for only 4 months.



Rosa, who was born in 1887, married John Monkhouse in 1908, died aged 52 years. Her brothers and sisters outlived her by many years, as can be seen below.

#### ❖ **Finale**

##### • **Postscript 1- Robert and Sarah Smith's family**

Of the five remaining children of Robert and Sarah Smith:

- Mary, born in 1882, married Albert Gay in 1907, and later married William Kay. She died in 1964, in Brisbane, aged 82 years.
- Ada, born in 1883, married Charles Frazier in 1903. She died in 1953, in Malvern, aged 70 years.
- Annie, born in 1885, married John Marriott in 1908. She died in 1972, in Frankston, aged 86 years.
- Frank, born in 1889, married Daisy Wood in 1918. He died in 1981, in Oakleigh, aged 92 years.
- Mildred, born in 1891, married Arthur Miller in 1921. She died in 1984, in Ballarat, aged 93 years.

##### • **Postscript 2 – Cheltenham Primary School**

As mentioned earlier, in the background of the path to the Smith grave site, is Cheltenham Primary School. It is State School No. 84, which proudly celebrated its 160th year in 2015. Cheltenham Primary is the fifth oldest school in Victoria.

I mention it not only because it shares a common boundary with the Cemetery, but it was the primary school that laid the foundation for your correspondent's education for 6 (seemingly very long) years. Ah, the memories of 50+ children in the classrooms, the small bottles of milk sitting out in the sun for hours in the mornings, corporal punishment (i.e. the strap) dealt out daily at the senior levels, and cream buns in the tuck shop (thanks Mum, for every time she did her bit there).

I mention this not only to relive the joys (?) of my childhood, but to also recall that we boys used to jump over the low fence between the school and the cemetery on hot summer days

(summer used to start in December and go through to the end of March and every day was 30° and sunny, back in those days), and we would look out for the giant blue-tongue lizards that used to spread themselves out on the concrete and marble slabs and lie there for hours soaking up the sun's rays.

Some boys may have also got hold of those smaller, nimble little lizards or skinks, and brought them back into school and placed them into unsuspecting people's desks or pockets, and wait for the ensuing screams and hysteria which followed their discovery when desks or books were opened.

Of course that mostly would not have included me. Most of the time. On the day I visited to take the photos, it was 25° and sunny and I kept a look out on the hot gravestones for any old friends. However, back then it was also a time when my interest in family names and histories may have been ignited.

- ***Postscript 3 – Cheltenham Pioneer Memorial Church***

About 100 metres away on the other side of the cemetery to the school is the Cheltenham Pioneer Memorial Presbyterian Church, where your correspondent received his initial religious education. For a young boy it was a bit of an austere environment back then, the church filled with 'old' people (average age of 30 - 40 years most likely), and the Sunday School crowded with a bunch of baby boomers. Those were the days!

At the time of Union, the Minister in place advised his congregation to remain independent and Presbyterian. My mother in particular (I recalled at the time) was extremely disappointed with the decision. Some two years later my parents moved house towards Frankston, and they joined the Seaford Uniting Church, where they worshipped and enjoyed the fellowship and Christian message happily for the rest of their lives.

I have returned to Cheltenham Primary School twice since I left (its 100 year anniversary, and in connection with this article). I think that out of respect for the memory of my mother and my own memories I have felt no desire to revisit the Pioneer Memorial Presbyterian Church – I spiritually and physically left when she did. Sometime after my marriage (mixed, to an Anglican no less), my wife and I found ourselves at a Uniting Church, and we found its theology and people a very good fit for us. We still do.

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