



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is a fine example of the Gothic Perpendicular revival (the latest of the three Gothic styles) in Australia. It is a finely proportioned interpretation of the style as designed by the prominent English architect Sir Walter Tapper and supervised by his son, Michael. Since completion in 1914, the pleasing aesthetics of the building have been acknowledged by the school, the local community and citizens of the State. (Criterion 1.1)

The execution of the design by skilled tradesmen many of whom came from England for the project is of a consistent and high quality throughout the building. (Criterion 1.2)

The chapel is the most prominent and major component of the 'village green' setting as experienced by the incumbents of the school, and also people passing along Terrace Road. (Criterion 1.3)

The characteristic verticality of the Perpendicular Gothic style marks an epicentre for the traveller in this generally flat landscape. The building can be seen from great distances - as such it is an important element, a landmark, in the landscape. (Criterion 1.3)

The chapel and associated buildings form a significant precinct, all elements playing a role in the concept. The public are able to participate in the enveloping qualities of the precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is the predominant icon of the school which has sought to provide an Australian interpretation of the traditional English Public School system of education. This has been provided to many boys who have become prominent citizens of the State and the Nation, and includes a large proportion of boys from rural areas. (Criterion 2.1)

The building is one of the crowning achievements of the Reverend Percy Henn, the Headmaster who actively pursued funds for a school chapel soon after his appointment in 1909. Henn eventually persuaded Cecil Oliverson, a

London businessman and philanthropist, to contribute the full cost of construction and fitting out as well as some of the furnishings. The architect, Sir Walter Tapper and his son Michael, who came here to supervise construction, were well known contemporary interpreters in England of the Gothic style. (Criterion 2.3)

The numerous crafts in the building include the spectacular floor tiling, wood carving, tapestries, iron work (by W Bainbridge Reynolds), glazing (some by J C N Bewsey), the reredos (J C N Bewsey) and stone work, amongst many. (Criterion 2.4)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The manifold building technical skills and traditional craft evident in the construction of this building established a benchmark from which future generations of artisans can learn. (Criterion 3.1)

The Chapel and its setting provide a fine demonstration of a colonial interpretation of the core of buildings considered important in the education component of the traditional English way of life. Criterion 3.2)

The skills evident in the execution of this building are of the very highest order of craftsmanship. (Criterion 3.3)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is the centrepiece of the school's ethos, melding religious, aesthetic and educational associations for the school community. Wider community participation in these values has been enjoyed since the consecration of the building. (Criterion 4.1)

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is one of the major heritage buildings in the historic town of Guildford. The building is a principal tourist attraction in the heritage trails of the Swan Valley. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

The place an unusually fine example of Gothic revival architecture, utilised for its associational values to the ethos of a boys school. The concept is unlikely to be repeated elsewhere due to changes in the community's symbolic expression of values. (Criteria 5.1 & 5.2)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is the finest and most prominent example of a chapel associated with a private school in Western Australia. (Criterion 6.2)

Guildford Grammar School Chapel is a fine example in Western Australia of a Gothic collegiate chapel set in a 'village green' and framed by the adjoining school buildings. The concept demonstrates the association and imagery of the school as a recollection of English village life and the pervading presence of religion as a central focus. (Criterion 6.2)

12. 3 CONDITION

The general condition of the building is good. After eighty years of continuous but careful use, the building and its finishes have acquired a patination which should be safeguarded.

Problems associated with deterioration of the lowest courses of the plinth stonework appear to have been addressed by drainage measures.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The place continues to be used for its original purpose, and retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Incipient fabric is totally as constructed and furnished at the time of consecration in 1914. Other than the loss of the replica Windsor Bible (destroyed by fire in the Sacristy in 1980, and since replaced by Queen Elizabeth II with another), none of the original fabric has been removed or lost. The place is totally consistent with its intended ambience.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by David Kelsall and John Pidgeon, Architects. Further research and referencing of sources in the documentary evidence has been carried out by Natasha Georgiou BA.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Guildford Grammar School was founded in 1896 by Charles Harper, who resided in the neighbouring mansion of 'Woodbridge', for the education of his children. By 1909 the school had grown to over 100 students, which led to Harper's decision to sell the school to the Church of England for £7,400-0-0.¹ Although this transfer did not eventuate until 1911, the Bishop of Perth and the Trustees of the Church of England had already appointed a Headmaster in 1909.²

This new principal was the Reverend Percy Henn (b. 21.1.1865, d. 25.2.1955), who was born in Manchester to the Reverend John Henn and his wife Catherine. He was educated at Oxford, became a junior master and Chaplain at Hurstpierpoint, Sussex, in 1888-1895, and later, from 1895 to 1899, was the founding Headmaster at Worksop. These schools were based on Canon Woodard's philosophy, which was a form of loose juxtaposition of the Oxford Movement and a resurrection of Anglican high church principles applied to secondary education.³ Henn was a disciple of Woodard's belief that a Christian school should have beautiful buildings and surroundings as well as a Christian atmosphere and that the chapel should dominate the whole.⁴ In 1899, Henn resigned from Worksop, keen to take up a missionary appointment. He was appointed as a curate in the Mission at Kalgoorlie for six weeks, then in mid 1900, to Geraldton as priest-in-charge, then Rector and later Rural Dean. While in Geraldton he married Jean Elliott in 1902 and they were later to have four children. He was then appointed to Northam where he remained for three years until he returned to England in 1905. For the next four years he worked for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts as organising secretary. He resigned this position when he was given the opportunity in 1909 to become founding Headmaster of Guildford Grammar, where he could apply Woodard principles in Western Australia.⁵

Henn's first thought for the new Anglican boy's school was the provision of a chapel and he began an appeal for funds for the project before leaving England to take up the appointment. He wrote a circular titled 'A Church of England Secondary School for Western Australia', in which he stated:

a Church Public School without its own Chapel can hardly be true to its character or efficient in building up strong and manly Christian gentlemen. The highest life of the English public school centres on its Worship. And nowhere more than in the Colonies is there wanted a supply of men, trained in an atmosphere of simple but

¹ Henn, Wilfred. *A Life So Rich*, (Henn, 1955), p. 43.

² *Forward*, Guildford Grammar Magazine, September, 1989, p. 1.

³ Henn, Wilfred. *A Life So Rich*, p. 21.

⁴ *Forward*, p. 1.

⁵ Henn, Wilfred. *A Life So Rich*, p. 41.

religious faith and practice, to go out into public and private life, and serve God in Church and State.⁶

This circular he distributed around the country in an attempt to raise £5,000 for the construction of a chapel. He received encouragement from people like the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr Cyril Jackson, and the Reverend Southwall.⁷ One of these letters he gave to his friend Annie Shackleton, who in turn gave it to her wealthy cousin, C.H. Oliverson. She then wrote to Henn to tell him to stop appealing since Oliverson had offered to bear the total cost of building the chapel himself. He too shared Henn's ideals about Christian education and he took an interest in the welfare of the British colonies.⁸

As Oliverson's involvement grew so did his commitment and with great foresight he looked to the future when Guildford would have at least 300 boarders and a unforeseen number of day students. This being so, he increased his pledge from the original sum of £5,000 to £30,000. Henn hired the architect Sir Walter Tapper of London, who was the leading designer of Gothic style architecture of his time, to design the Chapel of St. Mary and St. George.

Over the next two years, Sir Walter Tapper prepared a design and his son Michael came to Western Australia to implement it. Skilled artisans from England came to the State to assist. Photographs of the chapel under construction together with working drawings and other documents are held in the school archives.

Work commenced in February 1912 and the chapel took two years to build.⁹ The foundation stone was laid by Sir Edward Stone KCMG, the Lieutenant Governor, on 2 July 1912. The building was constructed from expensive Donnybrook stone, and was 80 feet high, 135 feet long, and 45 feet wide.¹⁰ J.C.W. Bewsey, a leading stain glass artist, was commissioned to design the east window and the unique raised reredos. Oliverson also paid for the furnishing of the chapel, which included the magnificent steel lectern with a swivel top, designed by W. Bainbridge Reynolds, who was the greatest metal worker of his age. This was because the lectern was to support the Windsor Bible of St. George's Chapel, with the insignia of the Garter on the outside cover, a gift from King George and Queen Mary.¹¹

The Chapel of St. George and St. Mary was eventually consecrated on Lady Day, 25 March 1914, with the final cost being £42,000-0-0.¹² The building was highly praised and envied throughout the country. The *Swan Express* stated that it was 'very valuable to the State and Australia'¹³, the *Sunday Times* said 'there is nothing to equal it in any college of the Commonwealth'¹⁴, and *The*

⁶ Henn, Percy, 'A Church of England Secondary School', 1909.

⁷ Private letters of Percy Henn, Public Records Office, Mn 102.

⁸ *Swan Express*, March 22, 1912, p. 5.

⁹ Henn, Wilfred. *A Life So Rich*, p.48.

¹⁰ *Swan Express*, 22.3.1912, p. 5.

¹¹ *Forward*, p. 3.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *Swan Express*, 29.3.1912, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Sunday Times*, 30.6.1912, p. 61.

West Australian called it 'the most perfect structure of its kind in the Commonwealth' and the 'finest Edwardian Gothic building in the country'.¹⁵

Throughout the decades the chapel has been integral in the education of the boys of Guildford Grammar and four special school occasions (Lady Day, Annual Confirmation, Speech Day, and Carols Service) are associated with the chapel. Students and their parents have also left their mark on the chapel, the most significant being the erection of six Memorial Windows in the 1950s dedicated to students who had died in World War Two as pilots in the R.A.A.F. During World War Two the school was taken over by the American Navy in 1942, to be used as a hospital. The students were evacuated to Fairbridge Farm school, near Pinjarra. The U.S. Navy painted large red crosses on the north and south faces of the chapel roof. The U.S. unit remained at Guildford Grammar for only three months and their place was taken over by the Australian Army. The school resumed residence in November 1943 and it became no longer appropriate to display the Red Cross emblem. The paint could not be removed and the Army threatened to remove it by taking away the tiles, which caused the school authorities to obliterate the crosses by using a paint that matched the tiles.¹⁶ Over the years the paint has worn off and the crosses remain as evidence of how World War Two affected the community.

In 1955 Percy Henn died at his home in South Perth and, as a memorial to his great influence over the school, his ashes were placed under the floor in the sanctuary of the chapel.¹⁷ Some renovations were done in the 1950s to the windows and the stonework and in 1967 the School Council established a Chapel Maintenance Fund.¹⁸ This was soon needed since, on 14 October 1968, the chapel suffered structural damage from an earthquake, centred on Meckering, that shook the whole of Perth. The stone cross fell onto the parapet, Sanctus bell tower cracked from top to bottom, horizontal cracks developed along the buttresses, and large chunks of plaster and stone fell from the ceiling. This damage was quickly repaired in six weeks with help from the school community.¹⁹

In October 1980, one of the boys started a fire that severely damaged part of the building and also destroyed and damaged furniture. The reredos and Electrolier was damaged and the chapel vestments, Windsor Bible, and parts of the flooring destroyed. Insurance covered only part of the repair costs and the rest was raised by the school. Queen Elizabeth replaced the Bible and new tapestries and glass windows were put in 1981. The entire restoration was completed in 1983 at the cost of \$650,000.²⁰ In 1989, Restoration Windows were dedicated on the Founders Day service to commemorate the inspiring response of the Old Boys to an Appeal in 1987 for the restoration of the chapel. The amount raised totalled just over one million dollars, ensuring the chapel's future maintenance.²¹

¹⁵ *The West Australian*, 26.3.1914 ; 28.3.1987, p. 7 & 42.

¹⁶ Oral History of John Saunders by Chris Jeffrey, OH 1986.

¹⁷ Aikman R.G. & Honniball J. *Guildford Chapel*, (Perth, 1962) p. 2.

¹⁸ op.cit. p. 78.

¹⁹ White Michael. *Go Forward*, (Fremantle, 1996) pp. 268-270.

²⁰ op.cit. p. 337.

²¹ *The West Australian*, 28.3.1987, p. 42-43.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

As evidenced by the early aerial perspective sketches for the proposed school, the vision was to provide a building with massing, form and detail which recreated the village atmosphere - the village green and church.

The siting and massing of *Guildford Grammar School Chapel* together with the associated school buildings faithfully recreates this intent. The Chapel is light coloured with its strong Perpendicular Gothic form. The surrounding school buildings partially enclose 'the green', their lower, red brick construction providing horizontal emphasis and the feeling of partial enclosure. Terrace Road which is lined with deciduous plane trees, passes along the south side of the green. Cottages and school buildings of heritage significance fronting Terrace Road form the south elevation and enclosure of 'the green'.

The passer-by participates in the values of this enclosed green space as, in a sense, the public is passing through the heart of the school. The whole concept is a showpiece, with the Chapel as a very pervading icon.

The building is the tallest in the vicinity and can be seen occasionally from a great distance. For tourists and river trippers, it is a significant landmark on the levee banks above the flood plain of the river.

The road approach into the Historic Town of Guildford from Midland to the east and the country beyond is flanked by this important heritage structure.

The external walls of the building are laid out in a simple rectangular plan. The Sacristy at the east end below the east window is single storey height with a lean-to roof of large sized stone shingles. The remainder of the building soars to the full height. Twin buttresses extend past each side of the Sacristy and are paired into the next buttress at the Chancel.

The deeply buttressed walls of the Choir meet the west wall at twin towers which flank the central entrance door. The towers are 'set back buttressed', each capped with a cupola and a domical vaulted pan tiled roof. The major openings are generally hood moulded with the drip stones extending down to the arch springing terminating with a short return. Each bay of the Choir is pierced with large stone traceried openings above the gallery level. The tracery is executed in the curvilinear style typical of the 14th Century with lancet headed windows. The doors are oak studded and carved with appropriate detail and hung on iron hinges.

The major construction element comprises load bearing brick walls faced externally with a pale mushroom hued variety of Donnybrook Freestone. The stone facings are smooth finished, squared and coursed on a deep cavetto moulded plinth. Rainwater heads and goods are cast iron with decorative fixings in the idiom.

The east and west walls have several carved stone cartouches embedded in the outer leaf of the wall fabric.

The roof is saddle backed and tiled with clay pan tiles. There is a lantern on the ridge, and the buttresses are capped with stone shingles. During World War II, the tiles on both sides of the roof were painted with a red cross on a large white square. The tiles in the area have either been replaced or the lack

of roof moss in that location is still evident. In any event, the painting on the roof, or its effect is still visible.

The interior is divided into several elements:-

The narthex extends for the full width of the building. Entrance to the Upper Gallery is provided by two doors to the towers with carved stone spiral stair treads through oak doors. The floor is black and white marble in a simple pattern. The east wall (the screen) and ceiling (at single storey height) is faced with ply with a large radius ply cove. Carved solid oak trim and battening covers the joints. A further doorway leads through the screen to the Choir.

The walls of the choir above the dado are hardwall plastered with stone quoins in the internal corners and on the blind ribs. The ceiling is arcaded, with fluted stone facings carrying past the imposts into the arch. The ceiling is white plaster panels with decorative cast plaster ventilation panels.

The dado, up to the deep cornice is richly carved oak and blind tracery with matching ply panels returning across the screen. The cornice itself is intricately fretted timber with applied decorative shields. Bays containing tapestries in an oak bolelection moulded frame with bosses of ballflower and quatrefoil designs extend from the cornice down to the back of the stalls. The choir stalls are simply carved from solid oak on stepped tiers. Engraved brass plates mark the seats for the hierarchy of worshippers. Lighting at that level is provided by electric bulbs with copper shades on white rods (resembling candles) set on bright brass bases. General lighting in the choir is from a large diameter suspended gilded steel ring fitting.

The floor is black and white marble laid in a simple 'top hat' pattern in the aisle and in a diagonal band at the crossing. The pulpit is oak, richly carved in keeping, raised a few steps above the aisle level.

The lectern is fabricated in bright steel set on an oak step. The head rotates and has two Bible rests. The general appearance is of shining armour. The joints between metal components are riveted.

There are two steps up to the chancel which has a groin vaulted ceiling terminating at the fluted respond and carved stone arch imposts. The walls are white plastered with stone trim similar to the choir. The reredos extends from the back of the altar to the sill of the traceried window of the east wall. The altar is stone supported on simple carved stone pedestals.

The east window is glazed in a traditional design.

The Sacristy is a simple room behind the altar accessed through a pair of doors each side of the altar.

Access to the Gallery was not possible. It extends full width between the towers across the west wall and has a passage leading along the sides of, and opening into the choir at gallery level between the buttresses.

From memory (of some 40 years ago) the Upper Gallery contained the hand worked organ pump in the north west corner.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition and Place File contents.

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

The following sources were used in the compilation of the Documentary Evidence.

Henn, W.E. *A Life So Rich*, 1982, the Author.

Archivist, Guildford Grammar School.

Bourke, M., *On the Swan*, 1987.

"Guildford, a study of its unique character", 1987, Guildford Study Group.

Davies, H. *William Wordsworth, a Biography*. 1980 George Weidenfeld and Nicholson Ltd

Leinster-Mackay, Dr. D. P., (1973) On the Un-English character of Western Australian Public Schools. *Early Days, Journal of the Royal Western Australian Historical Society*, Vol VII, Part VIII, p.49.

It is understood that at present (November 1995) no conservation plan has been prepared for the place although the owners are preparing to commission one.

Shire of Swan Municipal Inventory entry 222600