



# 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

The building is a fine example of Victorian ecclesiastical parish architecture. (Criterion 1.1)

The building is a landmark within Stirling Square, the central element of the Guildford townscape. (Criterion 1.3)

### 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

The building is of historic value as its siting is associated with the setting aside of Stirling Square for public purposes. (Criterion 2.2)

### 11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

The building is highly valued by the Guildford community for its religious and historic associations. (Criterion 4.1)

The building, as an integral part of Stirling Square, contributes to Guildford's sense of place. Stirling Square is modelled on a traditional English village green with the parish church located in the centre. (Criterion 4.2)

## 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 12.1 RARITY

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### 12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

The building is representative of small-scale Victorian ecclesiastical architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

The rebuilding of *St Matthew's* demonstrates the town's increasing prosperity and importance in the colony. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

After extensive repair work to the building exterior, the building is now considered to be in a safe and sound condition. Internal repairs due to water damage and cracking were carried out in 1990/91.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

The building has a high degree of integrity.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

The building is intact and although repair work has been carried out, the building retains a high degree of authenticity.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St Matthew's Church* is a Victorian Academic Gothic church, constructed in 1873, to replace an earlier church destroyed in a cyclone in 1872.

*St Matthew's Church* is the third Anglican church to be built in the Guildford area. The history of the siting of *St Matthew's Church* is integrally linked with the establishment of Stirling Square. The inspiration for the large open space in the centre of Guildford was the traditional English village green with the parish church located in the centre.<sup>1</sup> However, the early intention for the square was soon modified. By 1836, the first of many decisions to reduce the size of the square had been made, and the first Church of England church in Guildford was built not in the centre of the town square but on a site at the east end of town. This church was known as the Guildford Church.

With the square at the pivot of the major roads through Guildford, linking Perth with the inland districts, it was probably inevitable that a short cut across the open space would be proposed. A drawing made by surveyor Philip Chauncey in 1849, and a sketch by the Surveyor General J.S. Roe in 1858, both show an unofficial road diagonally traversing the square from the south-west to the north-east.<sup>2</sup>

By the late 1850s, Guildford Church was falling into disrepair. In February 1858, the Anglican Rector of Guildford, Rev. Williams, wrote: "The state of the church being so defective as to be unfit for divine service another winter, it is the opinion of this meeting that it would be better to build a new church in a more central situation than expend money upon the present building."<sup>3</sup>

The result was a new church to be called St Matthew's. The foundation stone of the new church was laid in March 1860 by Mrs. Kennedy, the Governor's wife, in the presence of 200 spectators.<sup>4</sup> The architect was Richard Roach Jewell, Colonial Architect of Works. The church he designed in Guildford was one of the first in the colony to be built in the popular Gothic revival style, and was greatly admired for its highly ornamented exterior.<sup>5</sup> With the construction of St Matthew's Church, the original intention of the 1829 plan, in which a church building would be the central focus terminating the vistas of the main streets was no longer possible. While this meant some loss of a strong townscape element, the square as a whole remained as the central element in the townsite, and at the hub of the town's activities.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richards, O., *Conservation Study: Stirling Square, Guildford, Western Australia* (prepared for the Shire of Swan and State Planning Commission, March 1989) p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Rev. W.D. Williams to Comptroller-General of Convicts, 11 February 1858, CSR vol.406/17 (Ecclesiastical) document cited in Richards, O., *Conservation Study: Stirling Square, Guildford, Western Australia* (prepared for the Shire of Swan and State Planning Commission, March 1989) p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> Bourke, M. J. *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District, Western Australia* (UWA Press, Nedlands, 1987) p. 202.

<sup>5</sup> For photograph of *St Matthew's Church* in 1862 (BL 26480P 6923B album) see copy held on file.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Richards, *Conservation Study: Stirling Square, Guildford, Western Australia*, p. 11.

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the church acre was shown on the town plans during the 19th century as being centrally located in the square, it is in fact nearer to the western boundaries as can be seen in contemporary surveys. Why this occurred is not known.<sup>7</sup>

The peaceful life of Guildford was interrupted in 1872 by a severe cyclonic storm, which was referred to as a 'hurricane'. The storm, which began on the morning of Sunday, 10 March 1872, had a destructive impact on St Matthew's Church. A newspaper report stated: "A violent storm visited this town yesterday, doing damage fully to the extent of £1,000. At about 10a.m. it commenced blowing in blasts of great force from the North (having previously been from the South) one of which struck St Matthew's Church on the eastern end where the chancel stood, causing the wall to rupture. Shortly after, the belfry over the porch came down with a crash, and a general anxiety was evinced for the safety of the Church. This unfortunately did not last long, as the walls began to vibrate, and, in a few minutes, the edifice was laid low. The harmonium and the minister's bible and prayer book were, however saved. The pulpit, reading desk, and pews are all either totally destroyed or much damaged."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary photographs of St Matthew's Church show only parts of the walls still standing.<sup>9</sup> Considerable damage was caused in the rest of the Guildford township, roofs were blown off, buildings blown down and telegraph lines and trees uprooted.

Steps were immediately taken to have the church rebuilt, and with the help of bazaars and donations<sup>10</sup>, rebuilding commenced in 1873. Fortunately, at the time Guildford was enjoying a period of prosperity. The establishment of a railway network in Western Australia in the early 1870s saw Guildford reach its highest point of development as a colonial centre of importance. The completion of a telegraph line between Perth and Guildford in 1871 gave a further boost to Guildford's commercial life. Various commercial and civic buildings were built, general beautification improvements were carried out and Guildford was described as 'the prettiest little town in Western Australia.'<sup>11</sup>

*St Matthew's Church* was designed by local resident Frederick Sherwood, and the contractors were Messrs. Montgomery and Wallace.<sup>12</sup> A newspaper article noted the efforts of the community, in the rebuilding of the church: "It would, however, be unjust to overlook the Restoration Committee who have at no little inconvenience, been energetic in fulfilling and accomplishing the trust reposed in them, and it is to be hoped that they feel rewarded in knowing that they have helped to raise a house in which they can unite in holy worship of Almighty God."<sup>13</sup> Particular mention is made of the stained glass windows that were used in the rebuilt church, "By the *Robert Morrison* the windows for St Matthew's have been received. They are of stained glass, and of neat design; when viewed from the interior they give a splendid appearance to the church."<sup>14</sup> The consecration of the church was carried out on 15 October 1873. The final cost of the construction of the church amounted to some £1,200, of

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7 *ibid.*

8 *Inquirer* 13 March 1872, p. 3.

9 For photograph of *Guildford - Churches, St Matthew's Anglican Church demolished by hurricane*, 10 March 1872 (BL 24659P), see copy held on file.

10 *Inquirer* 27 November 1872.

11 *ibid.*

12 *Inquirer* 15 October 1873, p. 3.

13 *ibid.*

14 *Inquirer* 1 October 1873, p.3.

which £900 was contributed by various means, leaving the parish a debt of £300.<sup>15</sup>

The church acre was fenced at some time between 1869 and 1872. It is likely that the ditch which surrounds the church grounds today was also in place during the 1860s, as its function as a drain would have been a necessity as soon the first church building was constructed.

The existing church organ was built in 1911, for £474 by Mr. J.E. Dodd. A Mr. Phipps was appointed organ blower; his salary of £12 per month included the task of ringing the bell before all services.<sup>16</sup>

At the turn-of-the-century, church records show a protracted argument over the site of the proposed parish hall. Eventually the Rector, Rev. Wesley Everingham, had his way and the hall was built adjacent to the church. The architects were Messrs. Hobbs, Smith and Forbes, who received payment of £49/13/6.<sup>17</sup> Tenders were first called in November 1905, and again in June 1906, when the successful applicants were Messrs Chapman and Firth with a tender of £965.

The church hall provided an important venue for social activities within the community. Initially, the vestry introduced a 'no dancing' rule in the hall and it was not until six years later, that it was decided that dancing would be permitted. During World War II, dances held for servicemen contributed significantly to Church revenue.<sup>18</sup>

The original rectory was built sometime between 1864 and 1873. However by 1930, damp problems made the building unfit for habitation and it was demolished. A new rectory designed by architect Ken Duncan, and built by Chas. Grayson and Sons in 1930, for £1,423.<sup>19</sup>

*St Matthew's Church* continues to play an integral role in the Guildford community.

## 13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St Matthew's Church* is a small Victorian Academic Gothic style church, constructed in 1873, to replace the church (1860) destroyed by a 'hurricane' in 1872. The church stands in the park setting of Stirling Square.

The orange brick building has tall lancet windows and a high pitched tiled roof, with brick gables. The roof, originally shingled, was damaged by fire in 1926 and the timber shingles were replaced by terra-cotta tiles.<sup>20</sup>

*St Mathew's Church* is cruciform in plan with porticos to the nave and southern transept. The nave is orientated east-west. The roof lacks

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<sup>15</sup> *Inquirer* 22 October 1873, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> *St Matthew's Parish, A Century of Worship*, (1960) p. 2. This publication uses the vestry minutes as a source of information, however, no references are provided.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

ornamentation other than the detail at the base of the cement coping at the gable ends, which are finished at the gutter level with an ornate pediment.

The walls are faced brick, with a rendered plinth, which has been subsequently painted a dark brown. The walls, and corners of the building, are strengthened by simple, stepped buttresses, however the corner buttresses corbel out at the top to support the gable ends.

The tall lancet windows are defined by rendered reveals crowned with hood moulds. The east end of the church features a triple lancet window, and smaller two light lancets either side of the narthex. The windows are glazed with stained glass.

The west end portico is highlighted by a bell cote; however, the bell has been removed and is now supported on a metal pole at the entrance. The entry doors are ledged and braced with a matching fixed panel in the arched head. An ornamental metal cross hangs above the doorway on the gable wall.

The church interior is austere with the exception of carved roof timbers. The roof is constructed of trussed rafters. The floor is constructed of timber boards and the walls are rendered. Walls were recently repaired in 1990. The interior features an organ to the southern transept and a stone and carved timber baptismal font immediately left of the narthex to the left of the nave. The altar is elevated and sits in front of carved timber wall panelling under the three light lancet.

In 1960, plans were prepared for an extension to the parish hall by architect Marshall Clifton, who also supervised renovation work in the church, carried out around the same time.<sup>21</sup>

In 1988/89, the St Matthew's Church Restoration Fund Committee received an National Estate Program (NEP) grant of \$5 600 to: investigate in detail the site and conditions causing a rising damp problem; recommend appropriate corrective measures and, restore the church font. This was carried out under the supervision of architect Kevin Palassis.<sup>22</sup>

In 1990/91, the St Matthew's Church Restoration Fund Committee received an NEGP grant of \$25 000 to: replace parapet trays, box gutters and replace or resecure step flashings; install new eaves gutters, rainwater heads and downpipes, restore parapet capping and ends; and, restore and reinforce cracked walls. This work was carried out under the supervision of architect George Winning.<sup>23</sup>

External window protection was installed in mid 1980s to protect the stained glass windows from vandalism. The windows are covered by black wire mesh, set into a light weight frame and fixed to the outside of the brickwork.

### 13.3 REFERENCES

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Palassis, K., *Restoration Project: St Matthew's Church, Guildford* (for State Planning Commission, October 1989)

<sup>23</sup> Winning, G., *Conservation of St Matthew's Anglican Church, Guildford* (Report for the St Matthew's Church Restoration Fund Committee for the Heritage Council of Western Australia, May 1992)

National Trust Assessment Exposition

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet

Palassis, K., *Restoration Project: St Matthew's Church, Guildford* (for State Planning Commission, October 1989)

Winning, G., *Conservation of St Matthew's Anglican Church, Guildford* (Report for the St Matthew's Church Restoration Fund Committee for HCWA, May 1992)