



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

### 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

A curtilage for inclusion in the Register is indicated on the attached site plan, and comprises the boundaries defined by Aberdeen, Fitzgerald, and John streets, and the western boundary of Lot 53.

#### PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 8.6 Worshipping
- 8.13 Living in cities and suburbs

#### HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education and science
- 406 Religion

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE\*

St Brigid's Church is a fine and substantial parish church in the Federation Gothic style and a good, restrained example of the work of Cavanagh and Cavanagh. (Criterion 1.1)

St Brigid's Convent is an excellent example of a convent, notwithstanding the loss of external detail, and the chapel or oratory is an outstanding aesthetic piece to designs by Cavanagh and Cavanagh, featuring a hammer-beamed trussed roof, painted dado and leadlight panel bay windows with decorative gold-painted arches. (Criterion 1.1)

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\* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

St Brigid's Parish Hall is a fine example of a parish hall, with some well-executed Flemish bond brickwork, and a good example of an institutional building designed by J J Talbot Hobbs. (Criterion 1.1)

Though somewhat compromised by some insensitive alterations and additions, the underlying fabric of the presbytery still retains the plan structure and fine aesthetic qualities of a two storey Federation Queen Anne dwelling that contributes to the collection of buildings as a whole. (Criterion 1.1)

In external appearance and with its principal internal spaces, St Brigid's Convent School is a good, simple example of a two storey school building in the Federation Arts and Crafts style. (Criterion 1.1)

St Brigid's Church is a well-designed church with a prominent belltower and is a local landmark. (Criterion 1.3)

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is a fine collection of buildings constructed at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century and collectively form an important historic group of places that is visually complex and harmonious. (Criterion 1.4)

## **11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE**

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* was established and operated by the West Perth Catholic Parish together with the Sisters of Mercy, one of a number of religious orders that came to Western Australia in the 1800s to educate and mission, and was one of a number of such places established by the Sisters of Mercy in suburban and regional areas in the late 1800s and the 1900s. (Criteria 2.1 & 2.3)

St Brigid's Convent School was established by a religious teaching order at a time before the government made primary schooling widely accessible in Western Australia, and operated from the late 1880s until the mid-1970s. (Criterion 2.2)

A number of buildings comprising *St Brigid's Group, Perth* were designed by prominent Western Australian architects: Parish Hall (original primary school building) designed by J J Talbot Hobbs; Convent and Church designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh; and, Convent School designed by R Dennehy. (Criterion 2.3)

## **11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE**

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## **11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE**

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is valued by the local and wider Catholic community for its continuing associations with the Catholic Church in general and the Sisters of Mercy in particular. (Criterion 4.1)

As a group of distinctive and well designed buildings of similar scale and materials, *St Brigid's Group, Perth* contributes to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12. 1. RARITY**

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* demonstrates several layers of practice in Catholic nuns' way of life and in changing practices and growth in Catholic education and represents a way of life no longer commonly practiced. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

St Brigid's Church is a very fine application of the Inter-War Gothic style of architecture, while the former convent, presbytery, parish hall, and teaching block represent a workmanlike application of the architectural language of the style in a very simple and decorative form. (Criterion 6.1)

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is indicative of the growth and development of the district, when Perth north of the railway line to the west of the city was populated by a predominantly Irish Roman Catholic congregation, then of the development of the Catholic education system, its evolutions to cater for a changing demographic and the endeavours to meet with changing standards. (Criterion 6.2)

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is a representative example of a school operated by a religious teaching order and of the development of Catholic education in Western Australia, and was one of longest running schools operated by the Sisters of Mercy in the State. (Criterion 6.1)

### **12. 3 CONDITION**

The buildings in the *St Brigid's Group, Perth* are generally adequately maintained, except for the classroom block. Buildings such as the presbytery have undergone many changes though maintenance and have lost some important exterior detail. Other buildings within the group have remained largely intact.

There is an ongoing programme of maintenance, though not all buildings are maintained at a high level. Overall the buildings are in fair to good condition, with some localised areas in very poor condition.

### **12. 4 INTEGRITY**

The church and presbytery remain in use for their intended purpose. The schools are currently not in use, but the convent remains in use for its intended purpose, with the integration of new users. Overall the place retains a moderate to high degree of integrity.

### **12. 5 AUTHENTICITY**

There have been numerous incremental changes to the buildings, particularly to the former convent and teaching spaces. The underlying structures to all buildings remains authentic although much change relates to fabric removal. Kitchens have been relocated, bathrooms introduced,

some rooms have been combined or partitioned. On the whole the remaining fabric retains a high degree of authenticity.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Jacqui Sherriff, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Philip Griffiths, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St Brigid's Group, Perth*, bounded by John, Fitzgerald and Aberdeen streets, North Perth, comprises St Brigid's Convent (1896/7; c. 1915; designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh), St Brigid's Parish Hall (1889; original school designed by J T Hobbs), the former St Brigid's Convent School (1921; designed by J R Dennehy), St Brigid's Church (1904; designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh) and Presbytery (c. 1902; possibly designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh). The Sisters of Mercy established a convent school in existing cottages on the site in 1888 and gradually had buildings constructed on the site to meet their needs. St Brigid's High School operated from the convent and adjacent cottages (now demolished) until 1972 and was a boarding school until 1929. In 1974, the Sisters moved to a new convent in Craigie and St Brigid's Convent was used by the Department of Corrections as a work release hostel until the Sisters returned in 1998. St Brigid's Primary School closed in 1976 and the building and adjacent Parish Hall were occupied by Perth Technical College's Department of Art and Design until 1988.

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is located on the eastern bank of what used to be Lake Sutherland, one of series of wetlands that formed a chain of seasonal lakes that extended from what is now Lake Monger to Claisebrook.<sup>1</sup> Subdivision of the Perth townsite was extended to encompass what is now *St Brigid's Group, Perth* in 1855. Development of the area was limited to small cottages associated with market garden allotments until the 1890s.<sup>2</sup>

Catherine McAuley founded the Institute of Sisters of Mercy in Dublin in 1831, with the sisters concentrating on helping and educating poor women and nursing the sick. The Order rapidly spread throughout Ireland, into England and to North America, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> The first group of Sisters of Mercy arrived in Western Australia on 8 January 1846 at the invitation of the Catholic Bishop, Dr John Brady.<sup>4</sup>

Supplemented by the arrival of more Sisters from overseas and other Australian colonies, the Sisters of Mercy established convents and schools

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<sup>1</sup> George Seddon & David Ravine, *A City and Its Setting: Images of Perth, Western Australia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1986, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Pitt Morison, 'Settlement and Development: The Historic Context', in M Pitt Morison and J White (eds), *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Nedlands, 1979, pp. 22-33.

<sup>3</sup> Anne McLay, *Women out of their sphere: Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*, Vanguard Press, Northbridge, 1992, pp. 221-3. The Order soon became the second largest female order in the world behind the French Daughters of Charity.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 7-10. The group included professed nuns Ursula Frayne (founding Mother Superior), Catherine Gogarty and Anne Xavier, novices Xavier Dillon, Ignatia de la Hoyde, Aloysius Kelly and Baptist O'Donnell and postulate-to-be, Catherine O'Reilly. They arrived on the same boat as the Benedictine priests who established themselves at New Norcia.

throughout Western Australia, firstly in Perth (Victoria Square, 1846; after temporary accommodation in St George's Terrace), Fremantle (1847), then Guildford (1855), York (1872) and Bunbury (1883) before branching out elsewhere. Between 1880 and 1900, branch convents and schools were established in Subiaco, North Perth, West Perth, Victoria Park, Toodyay and Coolgardie.<sup>5</sup>

Established as a branch house of the Victoria Square Convent, St Brigid's Convent in West Perth opened in a cottage (Lot Y144; reputedly given to the Sisters by an inmate at Fremantle Prison, James Conroy) near the corner of John and Fitzgerald streets in 1888.<sup>6</sup> The convent was described as 'neatly fitted up' by the Reverend Mother Evangelista and that it 'left nothing undone to meet the simple wants of the Sisters in their new home'.<sup>7</sup> Between 1889 and 1894, a chapel and several rooms were built alongside the convent, as was a temporary laundry and drill shed.<sup>8</sup>

Dr Gibney opened the Sisters of Mercy mixed school in July 1888:

The building [cottage on Lot Y145 facing Fitzgerald Street], which is to be used as a temporary school room, occupies a most convenient, cheerful and healthy site. The ground which forms the allotment is the highest in the vicinity, and has the advantage of clear frontages to three streets...<sup>9</sup>

The school opened with 58 girls and boys and at a time when there were very few government schools in the area.<sup>10</sup>

Tenders were called for the construction of a permanent school to be located on a site 'recently acquired by the Bishop at the corner of John and Fitzgerald streets' in January 1889. The existing cottage school was overcrowded and 'far too small for the number of children who seek admission'. The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Gibney on 1 February 1888, the feast day of St Brigid.<sup>11</sup> Designed by J J Talbot Hobbs and built by contractor J White, the school consisting of a hall and two classrooms was completed mid year.<sup>12</sup>

West Perth (St Brigid's) was declared an autonomous foundation on 25 May 1896, with Sister Mary Berchmans the Mother Superior.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117. The story goes that Conroy gave the cottage to the Sisters after Sister Mary Berchmans Deane visited him in prison. In August 1887, a month before Conroy was hanged for murder, title to his property was passed to his aunt, Mary Herbert. Title to the property was subsequently transferred to Bishop Gibney in July 1888. The Catholic Church gradually acquired the surrounding lots Y145 (Church, Presbytery and Primary School), and Y146 & Y147 (Convent Grounds) over time.

<sup>7</sup> *The WA Record*, 19 July 1888, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *The WA Record*, 18 July 1896, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *The WA Record*, 19 July 1888, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* Aside from the Girls' School in James Street (1877), there were no other government schools in the area until Perth Boys' School moved to the adjacent site in 1897 and the establishment of Highgate Primary School (1895) and Newcastle Street School (1896).

<sup>11</sup> *The WA Record*, 17 January 1889, p. 7; 31 January 1889, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *The WA Record*, 7 February 1889, p. 23; 9 May 1889.

<sup>13</sup> McLay, *op. cit.*, p. 128

New convent accommodation was completed in mid-1896 to designs prepared by Michael and James Cavanagh. The work comprised 'seven lofty and convenient living rooms in all and an enlargement of the convent chapel to about twice its previous size'. Messrs Ryan and Co was responsible for the work and Mr J Clarke fitted out the chapel.<sup>14</sup> In January the following year, a building fund was established to raise money for the construction of a 'new' convent.<sup>15</sup>

Incorporating the work completed the previous year and also designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh, the foundation stone for the convent additions was laid on 1 February 1897. The following May, *The WA Record* reported that the convent was 'in rapid progress of completion' and described the building as 'an ornament to the part of the city in which it is situated'.<sup>16</sup> At the time, there were 17 nuns living in the community. Construction was completed at the end of the year (c. December). A stone and iron fence was built around the convent c. 1900.<sup>17</sup>

In the early 1900s, the Sisters began to branch out into the suburbs north of the railway tracks.<sup>18</sup> The parish was administered independently from the Cathedral from 1901 and Anselm Bourke was appointed the first parish priest.<sup>19</sup>

St Brigid's Parish Presbytery was built c. 1902 (and possibly designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh) to accommodate Reverend Bourke. A photograph of the Presbytery in the Christmas 1902 issue of *The Record* shows a two storey brick and corrugated iron building fronted by a picket fence.<sup>20</sup> Bourke resided in the Presbytery until his death in 1924 and is credited as the 'builder' of St Brigid's Convent. McLay claims that Bourke contributed to the parish buildings out of his own funds.<sup>21</sup>

St Brigid's High School opened as a Young Ladies' School on 31 May 1901, with classrooms located in the convent building on the ground floor, directly under the chapel and in adjoining cottages on Lots Y146 and Y147. The school offered a variety of language subjects, art and other subjects considered 'socially essential'. In 1902, the school had 26 day pupils and 10 boarders, the majority of them Protestant.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *The WA Record*, 18 July 1896, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *The WA Record*, 23 January & 24 February 1897.

<sup>16</sup> *The WA Record*, 15 May 1897, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> 'Birth and Growth of St Brigid's, West Perth: Years Progress', in *The WA Record*, 28 July 1938, pp. 7, 10.

<sup>18</sup> McLay, op. cit., p. 148. The first branch house, 'Arranmore', was established in Leederville in 1903. Others in Osborne Park (1919) and Lesmurdie (1929) followed.

<sup>19</sup> McLay, op. cit., p. 122; 'Birth and Growth of St Brigid's', op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *The WA Record*, 27 December 1902. This is the same photograph as that in J T Reilly's *Reminiscences of Fifty Years Residence in Western Australia*, 1903.

<sup>21</sup> *Western Mail*, Christmas 1897, p. 66; J S Battye, *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, volume 2, p. 92; McLay, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>22</sup> McLay, op. cit., pp. 134-35. A portion of Lot Y146, containing a semi-detached house next door to the convent, was purchased at this time. The remainder of the Lot was transferred to the Sisters in 1913 and became part of the convent/school grounds.

The foundation stone for St Brigid's Church was laid on 22 May 1904 and was opened later that year. The Church was also designed by Michael and James Cavanagh, architects for the Roman Catholic Church:

An edifice that will be an ornament and delight to that part of the city has been designed by the architects. The building will be erected in two parts and the first portion now to be built will consist of the nave and side aisles. The design provides for a Church in the form of a Latin cross, with nave, side aisles, and transepts, along with sanctuary and vestries. The width of the nave will be 54 ft, height of walls 33ft to roof, and externally the elevations are planned in a tasteful way. The main constituent materials will be concrete cement in foundations, and best pressed brick on the walls, and for the roof the finest jarrah and Oregon timber. Traceried windows in cement concrete, and Vermont slates on roof. The edifice, which will be at the intersection of Fitzgerald and Aberdeen streets, will have the main entrance from the first named street, while there will be another door on the street frontage just mentioned. Columns and arches will be treated for the interior of the church, dividing the aisles and nave, while the roof will be in open timber work. A choir gallery, full width of nave, and 24ft in depth, will be reached by a staircase from near the principle entrance. A plain cross will surmount the gable and it will be set on an enriched apex. A turret, which will be used for gallery stairway, will be continued up beside the gable, and it will have a space for belfry.<sup>23</sup>

By this time, the children of the Parish were busily raising funds for the church building appeal.<sup>24</sup> A ceremony for laying the foundation stone was held in May. In his address, the Very Reverend Father Hunt spoke of the necessity for the church:

As the city of Perth with its suburbs as advancing so rapidly and spreading so widely additional churches were needed. They all recognized the great necessity of the new church for West Perth; the time had come for it...The St Brigid's church, when completed, would be second to none in Western Australia, and would only be surpassed when the new cathedral he hoped for was erected.<sup>25</sup>

The Church was able to contract for 'about three-quarters of the full design', with a tower and belfry to be added at a later date. Designed to accommodate 758 people, the it was expected that the contractors, Messrs Ward Bros, would have the work completed by the end of the year.<sup>26</sup>

St Brigid's Church was opened by Bishop Gibney on 5 February 1905. A feature of the sanctuary was brass work 'gratuitously made by Mr S Czynski'.<sup>27</sup>

St Brigid's High School expanded into another cottage located on Lot Y146 in 1913 and c. 1920, the cottage on Lot Y147 facing John Street was demolished to make way for the construction of two tennis courts.<sup>28</sup>

St Brigid's Convent was further extended sometime between 1915 and 1919, with the construction of two rooms to the north of the chapel. 'Paradise Room' was built for Sister M Borgia who had contracted tuberculosis and required isolation, and had louvered windows to allow for

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<sup>23</sup> WA *Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 13 February 1904, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> *The WA Record*, 29 February 1904, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> *The WA Record*, 28 May 1904, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *The WA Record*, 11 February 1905, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Report: St Brigid's Precinct, Aberdeen, Fitzgerald and John Streets, Northbridge', prepared for the Building Management Authority, September 1994, pp. 16-17.



the circulation of air. 'Limbo' was used as sleeping accommodation for other sisters.<sup>29</sup> Two laundry rooms were added to the north west of the ground floor service wing c. 1920.<sup>30</sup> Further additions to the convent were completed c. 1925 with the construction of a first floor accommodation wing containing 16 cells over the north-east service wing.<sup>31</sup>

In early 1920, attention was turned to providing better facilities at St Brigid's Primary School, which 'no longer [met] the requirements of the Education Department'. A building committee was established to raise funds so that work could start immediately.<sup>32</sup>

Tenders were called in early July 1920 for the removal of the existing school building on Lot Y144 (cottage and drill shed) and the construction of a new two-storey building. After the City of Perth approved the plans prepared by architect, R J Dennehy, contractor W Fairweather commenced work.<sup>33</sup>

Built to accommodate 450 students, the building was opened by the Archbishop on 3 April 1921. The Archbishop stressed the importance of maintaining church schools in addition to government schools, as the Church could 'plant and root thoroughly' the Catholic faith and nurture it through 'the tender and impressionable years of childhood'.<sup>34</sup> Despite the Parish's fundraising efforts, the remaining debt on the £6,075 school was extensive. An interest free loan of £1,350 over several years was secured and £600 in donations raised at the opening. Other fund raising activities planned after the opening included a bazaar, euchre parties, stalls and social dances.<sup>35</sup>

According to an interview undertaken by Lucy Williams in 1994, the Primary School building consisted of eight classrooms (four on each floor) facing onto an open verandah, which may have also been used for teaching. Each classroom had a raised platform for teachers. Fences separated the primary and high schools and convent.<sup>36</sup>

The former school building on the corner of John and Fitzgerald streets was converted to a Parish Hall. Costing £1,300, the work (including the installation of a kitchenette) was completed in time for the opening on 16 August 1921. The hall was described at the opening as 'one of the best

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<sup>29</sup> 'Joining in the Dance, West Perth Mercy Memories', manuscript, recollections of the Sisters of Mercy, c. 1988, cited in Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: Former St Brigid's Convent, John Street, Northbridge', prepared for the Building Management Authority, June 1994, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *The WA Record*, 22 May 1920, p. 4; 29 May 1920, p. 4; 12 June 1929, p. 4, as cited in Riley Hair Architecture Urban Design in association with Lucy Williams, Historian and Heritage Consultant, 'The former St Brigid's Primary School, Northbridge, Western Australia, Conservation Plan', prepared for Southern Cross Care Inc, August 2002., p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> *West Australian Mining, Building and Engineering Journal*, 19 July 1920, pp. 6 & 9; Plan for St Brigid's School, West Perth, City of Perth Building File 551-555 120, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 13 & Figure 2.5.

<sup>34</sup> *The WA Record*, 9 April 1921, p. 4, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Sr Norma Scheikowsky, interview with Lucy Williams, Historian, as cited in Williams, op. cit., p. 15. The Conservation Plan (2002) used material from a 1994 interview.

equipped in the city and will be a great parochial utility...The hall completes a splendid block of church buildings'.<sup>37</sup>

In 1928, there were over 600 pupils (including about 150 boarders) attending the high school, instructed by 40 sisters and several lay teachers.<sup>38</sup> Two cottages facing John Street were demolished to make way for a boarding school, but after land was purchased in Lesmurdie the plan was abandoned and all boarders from West Perth transferred to 'St Brigid's in the Hills' in April 1929.<sup>39</sup>

A sewerage diagram dated c. 1950 shows the following buildings on the site: brick Roman Catholic Church at the corner of Fitzgerald and Aberdeen Street, with a weatherboard extension/lean-to at the rear; two storey brick residence (presbytery) at the rear of the Church facing Aberdeen Street; stable, room and shed with brick floor at the rear of the residence; brick St Brigid's Convent facing John Street with basement at rear and verandahs at the front and rear and basement, with brick additions to the rear and east and brick earth closets at the rear of the yard; brick hall and school at the corner of John and Fitzgerald streets. Fences separate the convent and residence from the remainder of the property. No other landscaping features are noted.<sup>40</sup> By this time, the façade of St Brigid's Convent had been rendered and the original timber picket fence replaced with a brick and iron fence.<sup>41</sup>

In 1957, a new altar and sacristy were added to the western end of St Brigid's Church to a design by Anthony O'Hara.<sup>42</sup>

In 1971, the western section of the street block was resumed in readiness for the first stage of the Hamilton Interchange of the Mitchell Freeway. The street block was shortened by about one third, which resulted in the loss of the adjacent playing field of Hamilton Square and the truncation of John Street into a cul-de-sac, accessible only from Fitzgerald Street.<sup>43</sup>

By this time, the Sisters of Mercy were seriously considering their future at North Perth. Due to the changing nature of the area, student numbers were declining and the schools were becoming less viable. Options for amalgamating with other nearby Mercy schools were considered. St Brigid's High School closed in 1972, with students transferring to new premises at Koondoola.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *The WA Record*, 7 May 1921, p. 4; 9 September 1921, p. 4; 13 August 1921, p. 4; 20 August 1921, p. 4; 24 September 1921, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> McLay, op. cit., pp. 134-35.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>40</sup> MWSS&DDWA, 'City of Perth Metropolitan Sewerage', Sheet 70, Revised October 1950, Cons 4156, State Records Office of Western Australia (SROWA).

<sup>41</sup> Photograph of St Brigid's Convent, c. 1955, WA Newspapers, as reproduced in Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: St Brigid's Convent', op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> National Trust of Australia Assessment Exposition, prepared by Dirk Collins, 1991.

<sup>43</sup> Main Roads Department WA, Hamilton Interchange General Site Plan – MRD, Drawing Plan 6935, 1969 & Mitchell Freeway General Site Plan – MRD, Drawing Plan 7335-15, 1972, as cited in Williams, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> McLay, op. cit., pp. 346-47.

The Sisters moved to a new convent in Craigie<sup>45</sup> in February 1974 and the convent building was subsequently leased to the Department of Corrections, which used it as a work release hostel.<sup>46</sup> Working prisoners were accommodated in the former convent, and were required to be on site when not seeking or carrying out employment.<sup>47</sup>

St Brigid's Primary School closed in 1976 and two years later, the Perth Technical College's Department of Art and Design moved into the empty school and adjacent parish hall. Although the College viewed the move as 'temporary', considerable sums of money were expended in order to make the spaces workable as studios, classrooms and administrative areas.<sup>48</sup> The College also enclosed and extended the verandahs of the old primary school quadrangle and constructed an 'annexe' at the eastern end.<sup>49</sup> Influential artists who taught or were educated at the school include Marjorie Bussey, John Fawcett, Patricia Goff, Ron Gumboc and Leon Pericles.<sup>50</sup>

Circa 1983, the Prison's Department proposed to demolish the old convent building and replace it with a purpose-built hostel. Largely as a result of community protest, the plan was abandoned.<sup>51</sup> From 1 March 1989, the place was used as the Northbridge Community Corrections Centre and the first floor vacated.<sup>52</sup>

In 1989, work was undertaken to the Presbytery. This included the enclosure of the verandah, re-roofing and new garages.<sup>53</sup>

The exterior of the old primary school building was restored in 1997, assisted with funds allocated by the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia. Under the direction of Bruce Callow Architects and in association with architectural graduate Giovanni Conte, work focused on improving the street presentation, re-roofing in areas and the installation of new rainwater

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<sup>45</sup> Some of the stained glass windows from St Brigid's Convent were transferred to the new convent at Craigie. See Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: St Brigid's Convent', op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> McLay, op. cit., p. 372; *The West Australian*, 15 February 1974, p. 1, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 16. The Government purchased the building in 1979.

<sup>47</sup> *The West Australian*, 15 February 1974, p. 1, as cited in Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: St Brigid's Convent', op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Mc Lay, op. cit., p. 346; C Matthews, 'Modern Fables of Our Time', in RASH (Student Magazine, Department of Art and Design), Summer 1990, pp. 10-11; Mary Wright, *Art at Perth College: Ten Years at St Brigid's, 1878-1988*, Perth Technical College, Perth, 1988, p. 3, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> Information provided by staff at Perth Central Metropolitan College, School of Art and Design, August 1994, as cited in Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Report: St Brigid's Precinct', op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Information provided by Jeff Rollison, Ministry of Justice, and Peter Kalaf and Carl Torre, Northbridge Rotarians, as cited in Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: St Brigid's Convent', op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: St Brigid's Convent', op. cit., p. 14. Title to the site was formally transferred to the Government in April 1986 and was gazetted as a Reserve 40197 (comprising Lot Y144, Y145 and part of Y146) in November the following year.

<sup>53</sup> National Trust Exposition, prepared by Dirk Collins, 1991.

plumbing.<sup>54</sup> Perth Technical College vacated the site at the end of 1998 when the Department of Art and Design moved into a purpose built facility in Aberdeen Street.<sup>55</sup>

The East Perth Redevelopment Authority (EPRA) took over responsibility for the area around *St Brigid's Group, Perth* in 1998, when the Graham Farmer Freeway and Northbridge Tunnel were under construction. In front of the church and presbytery, Aberdeen Street was redeveloped as a plaza and named Piazza Nanni after Father Gaetano Nanni, who was St Brigid's parish priest from 1977 to 1988.<sup>56</sup>

The Catholic Church repurchased St Brigid's Convent from the Government in 1988.<sup>57</sup> After an extensive conservation program under the guidance of John Taylor Architect, St Brigid's Chapel was reopened to the public in April 2000. Assisted by a \$20,000 grant from the State Government's Heritage Grants Program, a surprising discovery during the conservation works was an original 1896 mural on the main wall. In addition to re-housing the Sisters of Mercy, the building also accommodated several community groups, including Kids Helpline and Adoption International.<sup>58</sup>

Refurbishment works to the Parish Hall commenced in 1999/2000 but were halted due to a lack of funds and uncertainty about the building's future use.<sup>59</sup>

The Graham Farmer Freeway was completed and opened in April 2000, creating a new road reserve in a deep trench to the north of the site. The following year, the Parish entered into negotiations regarding the exchange of land in order to regularise their holding and ease the physical scars created by the interchange.<sup>60</sup>

St Brigid's School, Church and Presbytery were classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA) in 1991. The Heritage Council of Western Australia placed St Brigid's Convent (fmr) on the State Register of Heritage Places in 1995 (permanent entry, 1996). In 2001, *St Brigid's Group, Perth* was included in the City of Perth Municipal Heritage Inventory with a recommendation that it be considered for entry in the State Register of Heritage Places. The group was also included in the Catholic Church Inventory (1998) with the same recommendation.

In 2003, the convent is in use for its intended purpose, with non-government organization social agencies occupying the rear additions. The Parish Hall is refurbished and is used as such. Part of the old primary school is rented

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54 Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit.

55 *ibid.*, p. 17.

56 Palassis Architects, 'Northbridge Urban Development Project: Conservation Report', prepared for the East Perth Redevelopment Authority, 2001, p. 40; *Voice News*, 2 July 1999, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 17.

57 *The West Australian*, 29 April 2000.

58 *The West Australian*, 29 April 2000; *Guardian Express*, 30 May – 5 June 2000.

59 Father Bruno Morotti, interview with Chris Hair, 30 April 2002, as cited in Riley Hair & Williams, op. cit., p. 18.

60 *ibid.*

to a dancing school, with remainder of the school buildings unoccupied. The church and presbytery are used as intended.

### **13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* comprises St Brigid's Convent (1888, 1896/7; c. 1915; designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh), St Brigid's Parish Hall (1889; former primary school designed by J T Hobbs), the former St Brigid's Primary School (1921; designed by J R Dennehy), St Brigid's Church (1904; designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh) and Presbytery (c. 1902; possibly designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh).

*St Brigid's Group, Perth* is bounded by John, Fitzgerald and Aberdeen streets, and the Mitchell Freeway to the west. The church, school, parish hall, convent and presbytery are located close to street frontages so that there is very little in the way of a landscape setting for these buildings when viewed from the streets. Land to the west of the buildings is bitumen paved in part, with a small area of lawn associated with the convent. By and large the areas west of the line defined by the eastern boundary of Lot 52 are remnants of earlier sporting ground surfaces, carparking and areas of weed. There is a Flame Tree and Jacaranda near the convent, with other plantings to the west that include Cape Lilac Trees and a Brachychiton. Other areas of landscaping are minor elements and are dealt with in associations with the buildings to which they relate. There is no overall landscape theme since the passing of the school functions and the lack of a need for keeping up the grounds, other than areas immediately adjacent to some buildings.

#### **St Brigid's Convent (1888, 1896/7; c. 1915)**

St Brigid's Convent comprises a number of elements including the original single storey house, the convent building, and the classroom extension to the rear. There are some outbuildings to the east of the classroom wing and these comprise toilet blocks erected in association with the TAFE improvements and the convent, both of which were constructed in recent times.

The 1888 section of the convent is a four room Victorian Georgian style cottage. The walls are constructed in brick and rendered over, with a hipped and steeply pitched Zincolume custom orb profile roof and colonial profile gutters. When the house was re-roofed, the chimney stacks were removed and the sheeting carried over the whole of the roof. It has skillion roofed verandahs to the front and rear supported on squared timber posts. There is a central four panel door with a hopper light over it and windows arranged in sets of three with central principal windows flanked with narrow sidelights.

The house is planned around four rooms with a central corridor. There are blanked off fireplaces in the western pair of rooms and the separating wall between the eastern pair of rooms has been removed, probably taking a pair of fireplaces in the process. It has timber floors, splayed skirtings, plastered walls and four-panel doors with moulded architraves. The ceilings in the eastern rooms are pressed metal, replacing lath and plaster,

the corridor has a plasterboard and cover batten ceiling, while the western rooms have plasterboard ceilings with a coved cornice. The rooms are used by the archivist, for storage and small meetings.

The buildings has been changed in numerous ways, including re-roofing, replacement of the verandahs, render to the brickwork, changes to ceilings, the removal of fireplaces and the addition of a small toilet facility on the rear verandah, together with a door in the western wall.

Years of change and maintenance have changed the surfaces and some of the structural walls, detracting from the original intent. However, the original intent is basically legible and the bones of the building authentic.

The main section of St Brigid's Convent (1888, 1896/7) is a typical rendering of a convent in Western Australia. It is a two-storey rendered brick and custom orb profiled roof building in the Federation Gothic style.<sup>61</sup> There is a render brick wall with cast iron palisade fencing along the property line, and the cast iron palisade makes use of a trefoil pattern with leaf and berry motifs as decorative devices. The front elevation is a symmetrical arrangement divided into a central entrance bay, flanking arcade and gabled bays that terminate the elevation at both ends. The central bay has a gabled entry, with step leading up to an arched entrance, comprising an impost and two pointed arch, then an entablature with the date 1897 in bas relief, then balustrade, two pointed arch, sculpture niche and then the gable that terminates with a crucifix. Either side of the entrance arch, there is an arcade of two bays, with imposts and low arches similar to the entrance arch, then an entablature with the words 'SANCTAE BRIGIDAE' to the west and 'HINERINIAE PATRONAE' in bas relief. The masonry balustrade motif is repeated in the first floor arches, and the first floor arches flow a similar profile to the arch in the central gabled section. The upper level arcade terminates with an eaves gutter to a Zinalume custom orb skillion roof, with the main roof covered in the same material beyond. Beyond the verandah line lie single pane double hung sash windows and doors centrally located behind the entrance arch, with the front door being a four panel timber door, with sidelights and fanlight, all with stained glass leadlights. The gabled bays comprise a tuck pointed rock faced limestone foundation wall and rendered brick walls over the foundation line. The bays are structured within a gabled wall pattern, with faceted bay windows with masonry mullions within the bay. They terminate with a hipped roof to the west and a crenellated parapet to the east, with gables matching the centre gable to complete the composition, including ridge crosses at the apex of each gable. The side elevations are simply treated, with eaves terminating walls with single pane double hung sash window and lancet windows to the chapel on the west elevation. Verandahs to the rear of the building are under skillion roofs. The front verandah has a quarry tiled floor and a bead reed moulded timber board lined soffit.

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<sup>61</sup> Apperly, Richard, Irving, Robert, Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989. pp. 120-123.

The interior is typical convent planning, with a centrally located entrance hall and stair, with parlours located around the stair and cells arranged along the corridors to the east and west of the entrance hall, on either side of a corridor. The plan then departs from the standard arrangement, with a second row of rooms located to the north, with a lightwell area separating north and south rooms. At the western end of the building at ground floor level, there is the site of the infirmary, cells and a second stair, while at the eastern end there is the former noviates room and cells. On the north-west corner, some cells have been converted to disabled toilets, as have a number of cells along the northern corridor. Elsewhere pairs of cells have been joined together to create useful contemporary standard bedrooms. At first floor level, there is an oratory or chapel at the western end of the building, cells and cells that have been converted to toilets, and the current refectory that has been created by the combination of a number of earlier rooms including the earlier community room and linen store.

The front entrance has a tessellated tiled floor, but generally the floors are timber construction, with a carpeted floor finish. Walls are generally plastered with lath and plaster ceilings, generally with out elaborate decoration. Special features include the timber stair cases, fireplaces complete with cast iron fire boxes in former parlours, and the oratory or chapel. The oratory occupies most of the west wing at first floor level and is a single rectangular space and bay window at the south end, with a hammer beam trussed roof with tongue and grooved board lining, plastered walls and timber floors. The walls have a painted dado and gold painted decorative devices to the arch of the bay window. The bays windows have stained glass leadlight panel. There is a carved timber altar, altar screen, pews, and thrones for the Superior and Priest, located at the northern entrance to the chapel.

A number of the cells have had the intervening walls removed to produce enlarged bedrooms to meet contemporary requirements. A former store in the north west corner has been converted to a disabled access toilet, while a number of cells at first floor have been altered to form bathrooms. These have tiled floors and dados with modern sanitary fittings. The recreation area in the first floor eastern wing remains a large uninterrupted space, but has been refitted with a modern kitchen and ancillary facilities.

The former single storey refectory wing remains, with its kitchen, dining area and scullery, but these spaces are used for meeting rooms.

Significant changes to the wing include the simplification of the exterior depression that occurred when the whole of the building was rendered. The roof and rainwater goods have been replaced and the whole of the front garden is a recent creation. A number of rooms have been combined, bathrooms installed and the oratory obscured by later alterations and then re-revealed. A number of lath and plaster ceilings have been replaced with plasterboard ceilings with coved cornices.

The final section of the block is the 1915 wing that extends north from the eastern wing and the old refectory. This a two-storey brick construction building with a gabled roof sheeted in Zinalume custom orb, with timber

construction verandahs extending along both sides of the building. The verandahs have unlined soffits and balustrades are simply constructed with fibreboard panels, and steel construction escape stairs. The walls are plain stretcher bond cut and struck brickwork. There are panel and glazed doors to each room, with glazed hopper lights over them.

The ground floor plan consists of the refectory facilities as previously noted and the former laundry to the north.

The first floor plan consists of back to back rooms strung along the north-south axis, with access to each room via French doors from verandahs. The southern range of rooms has a wider plan than the northern range located over the former laundry. In the original configuration, the wing was divided into cells, but many of the intervening partitions walls have been removed to create larger spaces, now used as offices. The interiors comprise carpeted timber floors, splayed skirtings, plastered walls and replacement plasterboard ceilings with coved cornices.

The original functions have been removed from all of these spaces and the rooms re-fitted for a variety of administrative functions and for meeting spaces. Some partitions have been removed, kitchen fittings removed and some ceilings replaced. External timber stair cases have been replaced with steel construction staircases.

There are some local damp problems in the buildings and some deterioration of timber components, but otherwise the building is in fair to very good condition.

### **Parish Hall (1889)**

The Parish Hall and St Brigid's Convent School extend from the corner of John and Fitzgerald streets to a point very close to the church on the corner of Aberdeen and Fitzgerald streets, with the earliest building, the Parish Hall, being at the southern end of the group. The buildings are joined and this section deals with the Parish Hall.

The 1889 Parish Hall is part is a single-storey stretcher and Flemish bond brick building on a stucco base, with Zinalume custom orb roofs in simple Victorian Regency style.<sup>62</sup> The south elevation has a stretcher bond brick base, and stretcher bond gable wall, with a pair of windows in with stucco lintels and sills that are divided into three panes and three tiers. The top section is fixed louvred lights and the lower two sections opening lights. Above the windows there is a long stucco panel with the words 'SAINT BRIGID'S PARISH HALL' in bas relief. The wall terminates with a gable with a moulded stucco coping, and there are three louvred grilles in tall slit openings in the gable. Skillion roofs are attached to each side of the hall elevation covering stores that flank the hall. The eastern elevation is a much more elaborate arrangement that comprises the gabled roof parish hall, skillion roofed store, gabled roof ancillary rooms to the hall and the gabled roof northern hall. The elevation comprises a stucco plinth, Flemish bond brickwork walls, four pane double hung sash windows, and timber doors

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<sup>62</sup> Apperly, Richard, ...ibid pp. 46-49.



with shelter hoods over them, stucco lintels and sills, and circular vents in the gables. The northern hall is slightly more elaborately treated, with a moulded string running across the wall at the height of the top quarter of the windows and lintels have decorative keystones. The centre window steps up an extra pane and this section is a hopper light. To the west, the covered area retains its original brick walls and double hung sash windows. The roof has been extended to the line of the convent on the western side of the building. The area consists of a broken up floor slab and excavated areas that appear to relate to removed material relating to the period of use as a technical college.

The plan takes the form of a long rectangular hall with the long axis running north-south, facing on to John Street with windows and doors to the east and west elevations, two stores to the south end of the hall, and then two larger ancillary rooms to the northern end of the building, with the hall being the principal space. At the northern end of the group of spaces, there is a second rectangular plan hall with its long axis running east-west, and windows and doors ranged along both sides of the building, some of which have been screened off by later additions.

The main hall space at the southern end of this group has a replacement narrow boarded timber floor, quad and moulded skirtings, plastered walls with a perimeter picture rail, a low stage, with a timber panel screen the full width of the stage, a bow string iron and timber trussed roof, with the soffit lined with painted tongue and groove boards. The timber panel screen cover an earlier opening that linked the two hall spaces, north and south. There are modern timber shutters mounted over windows, air conditioning grilles in the west wall, new brass construction wall bracket lights and pendent lights of a similar style suspended from the roof truss system. Doors leading off the hall are generally flush and the openings lead into a kitchen area, stores, meeting room and to the undercover area to the west. Ancillary areas have plasterboard lined raking soffits, plastered walls and the opening treatments mentioned in the description of the exterior elevations.

The northern hall retains earlier board flooring, over which a dance floor has been laid. There is a very large profile quad at the wall junction and the interior walls are simply painted brickwork. The roof structure is very similar to the adjoining hall, but the soffit lining boards are laid on a diagonal of diaper pattern, with perforations in the ceiling in a trefoil pattern. The space is partitioned to the west and north to create an entry and a costume store, and a set of steps make the transition from the hall floor level to the adjacent teaching block ground floor level.

The southern rooms have been upgraded for contemporary use and the northern hall has been left with decorative treatments from the technical school days. Air conditioning has been introduced, windows have been modified in some locations and modern light fitting installed throughout. A dance floor surface has been added to the northern hall and there have been a number of modifications made to the western covered area.

Most of the building is in fair to good condition but there are some areas, in particular the western covered area, where there is deteriorated brickwork, joinery and ground level finishes. There is some general deterioration of joinery. On the whole this group is in fair to good condition, with a number of areas in poor condition.

### **Presbytery (1902 to 1980s)**

The presbytery faces on to Aberdeen Street, and is located to the west of the church. It is in a small garden setting screened from the street by a modern face brick wall and mild steel construction gate. The main plantings comprise cypress trees and bougainvillea that is trained over the front garden wall and gate. A brick path leads from the gate to the verandah. The presbytery comprises the original six rooms, and addition to the front of the building, a large addition to the rear and a three-car garage, also to the rear.

The front section is the original section of the presbytery and is a two storey brick and Colorbond custom orb roofed building in the Federation Queen Anne style.<sup>63</sup> The main features of the house in the original style are visible on the north and east elevations. The house has an asymmetrically planned front which allows the roof to have two steeply pitched half timbered gables with fluid lines of timbering and lattice timbering over a roughcast render background. Both gables are jettied off the masonry line with timber brackets. There are two sets of original single pane double hung sash windows set in stretcher bond brick walls, with stucco lintels, sills and a string course. There are timber framed and metal roofed sunhoods over both pairs of original windows. Tall brick and stucco chimneys are still located over the two original fireplaces. The once part front and return verandah on the western side have been filled in with a brick screen and aluminium sliding windows, which has obscured the original form of the building. To the rear of the house, a two-storey extension masks the whole of the southern side of the original buildings and returns part way around the western elevation. These two elevations are in dark red face brickwork and have aluminium windows and a Colorbond custom orb roof. The architecture employs some of the decorative devices from the original building, but in a poor interpretation of the original style. A single storey lean to verandah has been placed along the eastern side of the building, making a partially sheltered connection with the adjoining church to the east of the presbytery.

The original section of the house comprises four main ground floor rooms and a hall, with a corridor in place of the original bathroom at the southern end of the hall and four first floor rooms in the same plan form. A small office has been created by filling in part of the ground floor verandah and a sleepout at first floor by filling in that verandah entirely.

This section of the house generally has timber floors, moulded timber skirtings, plastered walls, single pane double hung sash windows, picture rails and replacement gyprock ceilings with coved cornices. The main

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<sup>63</sup> Apperly, Richard, ...ibid pp. 132-135.

feature of the house is a scissor stair made of timber with turned newels, a wreathed handrail, turned balusters, and a carved stringer. Other features include fireplaces in the two front rooms and these retain their original features.

The additions to the front include an office on the ground floor and sleepout on the first and these rooms are simply rendered with carpeted floors, skirtings, aluminium framed windows and plasterboard ceilings with coved cornices.

The two storey addition to the rear of the building includes a new staircase, a large living room on the eastern side of the house, a dining room at the centre and then a kitchen, laundry and water closet to the western side. At first floor level there is the stair, landing and two further bedrooms with an ensuite bathroom. Most of the ground floor is tiled concrete with the remainder carpeted, varnished timber skirtings, door frames and doors, laminate covered fittings, aluminium window joinery and gyprock ceilings with coved cornices.

### **St. Brigid's Church (1904)**

St. Brigid's Church is located on the corner of Aberdeen and Fitzgerald streets. While the latter remains a busy street, Aberdeen Street is now a cul de sac and has been landscaped with hard and soft landscaping to provide a paved and green forecourt to the east and north of the church, using standard City of Perth unit pavers and swards of grass and new tree plantings.

St. Brigid's Church is a traditionally planned church with an entry lobby, nave, aisles, transepts, sanctuary, sacristy, and belltower and is similar in many respects to St. Mary's in the *Aronmore Catholic College Group* in Leederville, other than the fact that it has aisles. This planning gives rise to its characteristic external form.

St. Brigid's Church is a brick, stucco and tiled roof church in the Federation Gothic style.<sup>64</sup> Its front or east elevation comprises the principal elements of porch, east front of the nave, the belltower and spire, and the skillion roofs of the aisles. The porch has a perpendicular gothic door opening with a pair of tongue and grooved faced framed and ledged doors, with a fixed panel taking up the shape of the arch. The door has a quoined surround and label mould. On either side of the porch the tuck pointed brick walls are buttressed with brick buttresses, with stucco cappings. The gable roof to the porch terminates in a bas relief panel and a stucco coping, topped with a Latin cross at the top of the gable. The east wall of the nave is dominated by the stained glass leadlight window. The window takes a Greek cross pattern for its structure to divide up the rose window, and then uses quatrefoil patterns to articulate these elements. The framing work is done in pressed cement or concrete. The window has an arched head with a quoined surround and label mould. The remainder of the façade is tuck pointed brick, with stucco bands at intervals. The gable is treated in a similar decorative manner to the porch, but on a larger scale, with a set of three

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<sup>64</sup> Apperly, Richard, ...ibid pp. 120-123.

louvred vents just under the decorative panel at the top of the gable. The aisles are simply treated with tuck pointed brick walls, string courses, a single lancet window, and then parapets caps to match those previously described. The belltower is an octagonal plan, and rises in banded tuck pointed brickwork to a height just above the church ridge line, where it terminates with a stucco bell housing, with louvred vents, a dentil course and then an entablature that terminates with a crenellated parapet cap. A modest spire extends from the top of the belltower and this has a cast iron wind vane atop.

The north and south elevations differ. The north elevation is divided into seven bays with stepped buttresses, with the fourth or middle bay being a side entrance, designed in a similar fashion to the front entrance porch, but with a modest rose window. There are perpendicular style windows to the aisle, with stained glass leadlights, and then a series of perpendicular windows in a rectangular stucco frame to the clerestory. Aisle and nave roofs are covered with concrete tiles. To the west of the entry porch, the masonry wall passes through the tiled roof at the west side of the fifth bay. The south elevation repeats a similar pattern, but without the centrally located door. In two locations, the space between the buttresses is infilled with sets of three confessionals, with lancet central window and quatrefoil flanking windows.

The church is arranged the entry lobby, nave, aisles, transepts, sanctuary, sacristy, and belltower, together with the organ loft. The nave of the church is characterised with its central aisle and the square piers with Corinthian capitals and curved arches that separate aisles from the nave, then string course, clerestory windows curved bottom chord truss, and cathedral style timber board lined soffit. A tessellated tile floor extends the length of the aisle. Three chandeliers are hung along the length of the aisle. There is a stone alter rail at the edge of the sanctuary at the point where the floor of the nave steps up into the sanctuary, and a perpendicular style arch, visually separating the body of the church and the sanctuary. The aisles have plastered walls with a dado, the windows as previously described, and a timber lined sloping soffit, with depictions of the Stations of the Cross along the sides of the aisle wall. Off the southern wall there are three sets of doors in tow locations that make up the original confessionals. Votive statuary is set against many of the piers, with each piece facing east. There are chapels to the east and west of the sanctuary and the sanctuary itself is set apart from the rest of the building with a shift away from the perpendicular style to three lancet style windows in the western wall. There is a marble altar against the west wall and a marble lectern. At the eastern end of the church, there is a set of steps leading up to an organ and choir loft, all of stained timber construction. The sacristies have timber floors, plastered walls, paneled doors and are otherwise quite plain.

There appear to have been few changes to the church, with minor works including the installation of electric light and a sound system, some work around the entrance, replacement of the tiled roof and the changes to the setting.

Deterioration has occurred in tuck pointing on the weather elevations and the rainwater goods are in poor condition in several locations. Several stained glass leadlights have been destroyed by vandals. Overall the building is in fair to good condition.

### **St. Brigid's Convent School (1921)**

The convent school building is a simple plan building, with four major rooms on each level and a wide verandah on the western elevation. There are two three bay classrooms at the centre of the building flanked by a set of classrooms at each end, giving the building its symmetrical form.

This is a simple two storey brick and clay tiled roof building, with a rear verandah in timber construction in the Federation Arts and Crafts style. A series of later additions to the northern end of the block, extending west in to the site have been removed to reveal much of the 1921 fabric of the building.

The front elevation is constructed in face brick, with two sets of three windows articulating the wall. These are constructed in timber and are divided into six panels with fixed and opening lights. There are individual stucco sills and lintels. The gable bays use the same motifs, but have an arched brick lintel over the windows and a group of three louvred vent to the top of the gable, then a stucco parapet capping. The whole of the roof is covered with terracotta Marseilles pattern tiles. The rear verandah is made up with massive timber posts, bearers, and then traditional timber construction floors. Much of the upper verandah has been filled in to make up additional rooms such as stores and studios. The original timber construction stairs are still a distinctive design element, but all of the verandahs are enclosed with asbestos cement sheeting with aluminium framed awning windows and louvres. The massive timbers that carry the timber floors on the upper verandah are cantilevered out over the post line, creating a wider verandah at first floor level than ground floor level.

There are four similar teaching spaces on each level. At the ground floor level the verandah has a concrete floor, with a door and hopper light and two sets of windows to each classroom to allow good cross ventilation. The windows are casements, hoppers and fixed louvred lights. The room interiors comprise timber floors, large quads, plastered walls, picture rails, and pressed metal ceilings. There are the remains of air conditioning systems on parts of the verandahs. The rooms are partly repaired and almost ready for redecoration.

The verandah enclosures are irregular in plan, and make various parts of the formerly open verandahs into teaching spaces and stores.

The timber floors have been replaced at ground floor level, the roof appears to be replacement tiling, all of the fittings have been removed from classrooms and the rear verandah has been infilled.

There is evidence of termite damage to the verandah and a good deal of the partition work has been vandalized.

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

#### The architects

J J Talbot Hobbs

John Joseph Talbot Hobbs (b. 1864, London, arr. Perth 1887), worked as an architectural draftsman with builder, John Hurst, with whom he migrated to Western Australia in 1887, and whose daughter, Edith Ann, he later married in 1890. After initially working as a carpenter, Hobbs set up practice as an architect. In 1891, he won the design competition for the Weld Club in Barrack Street, Perth. Thereafter, he prospered and 'became a leader in the small band of Perth architects', serving as treasurer of the newly formed West Australian Institute of Architects (1896) and as president (1909-11).<sup>65</sup> From 1905, he was senior partner in the firm of architects Hobbs, Smith & Forbes.

His military service had begun with the 1st Cinque Ports Artillery Volunteers in 1883, and joined the Volunteer Field Artillery in Perth in 1887, being commissioned in 1889. In 1903, he commanded 1st (Western Australian) Field Battery. By 1908, he was Lieutenant-Colonel, Western Australian Mixed Brigade, and rose to Colonel, 22nd Infantry Brigade in 1913. He was also staff officer for army engineering services (1906-12) and served as aide-de-camp to the Governor-General (1908-17). In 1914, on the outbreak of World War One, Hobbs was appointed to command the artillery of 1st Division, A.I.F. (Australian Imperial Force). He served at Gallipoli in 1915, and was appointed C.B. (Companion of the Order of the Bath). In March 1916, he went to France as commander of 1st Divisional Artillery. In October, he became acting commander, 1st Anzac Corps Artillery, and was given command of 5th Division in December, then promoted to Major-General on 1 January 1917. He commanded with 'great distinction and earned the undying affection of 20 000 men'.<sup>66</sup> In December 1917, he was appointed K.C.B., (Knight of the Order of the Bath) and succeeded John Monash in command on 28 November 1918, as acting Lieutenant-General, and continued in command of Australian Corps through to May 1919, having been appointed K.C.M.G. (Knight Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George) in January. In addition, he was awarded the Serbian Order of the White Eagle (1917), was twice awarded the French Croix de Guerre, and was mentioned in dispatches on eight occasions.<sup>67</sup>

Michael Cavanagh trained as an architect with the South Australian Public Works Department and studied in London before arriving in Western Australia to set up a branch of his South Australian architectural practice. He went on to become one of the State's best known architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1900, his younger brother James joined him in partnership in Perth. Herbert Parry joined the firm in

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<sup>65</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography* *ibid*, p. 315.

<sup>66</sup> Major-General Sir Brudenell White, quoted in *ibid*, p. 316.

<sup>67</sup> *Australian Dictionary of Biography* *ibid*.

1908. The firm designed many buildings for the Catholic Church, as well as a range of commercial and residential properties.<sup>68</sup>

Other churches designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh include<sup>69</sup>:

- Redemptorist Church & Monastery, North Perth: 1903; 1912; and 1922; a three storey Cottesloe limestone construction monastery and church complex completed in stages, with a tiled roof designed in the Federation Gothic style. (Under consideration for entry in the Register of Heritage Places along with adjacent Monastery).
- Star of the Sea, Cottesloe: 1904; Gothic Revival style; local limestone with a later porch (possibly by E J Henderson in the 1930s or 1940s).

Other convent type buildings (including monasteries and orphanages) designed by Cavanagh and Cavanagh include<sup>70</sup>:

- Christian Brothers College: 1895; 1912 (now demolished); brick building in the Romanesque style with central tower, arcade and wings with bay windows.
- Mercedes School House: 1896; limestone and brick building with octagonal tower at the rear displaying influences of the Arts and Crafts style.
- Convent of Mercy, Bunbury: 1897; rendered brick and iron roof in a similar style to the St Brigid's Convent.
- Main Building, Clontarf (St Joseph's Boys' Orphanage): 1901; materials, style.
- Redemptorist Monastery, North Perth: 1903; 1912; style. (Currently under consideration for Register of Heritage Places along with the adjacent Church)

Other buildings designed by the firm include:

- Great Western Hotel (Brass Monkey), William Street, Perth (1896; RHP)
- P&O Building, High Street, Fremantle (1896; recommended for RHP)
- St Kevin's Industrial School for Boys, Glendalough (1897)
- 20 houses for the Catholic Church, Highgate (1897)
- Central Fire Station, Murray Street, Perth (1900; RHP)

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<sup>68</sup> I P Kelly, 'Architectural Biography, 1890-1915', prepared as part of degree of Master of Architecture, University of Western Australia, 1991. See also Jane McKenzie 'Michael Cavanagh F.R.I.B.A. Western Australian Architect 1860-1941, His Life, His Philosophies and His Architecture', Architecture Minor Study 400, Curtin University, 1992.

<sup>69</sup> Jane McKenzie, 'Michael Cavanagh FRIBA: Western Australian Architect 1860-1941: His Life, His Philosophies and His Architecture', Architecture Minor Study 400, Curtin University, 1992, pp. 21-22.

<sup>70</sup> Jane McKenzie, 'Michael Cavanagh FRIBA: Western Australian Architect 1860-1941: His Life, His Philosophies and His Architecture', Architecture Minor Study 400, Curtin University, 1992, pp. 26-34.

- Catholic Church, Bindoon (1909; recommend RHP)

### **Convent Schools and Colleges**

Late nineteenth century and twentieth century catholic schools were built to a similar pattern. The pattern of convents and monasteries was almost the same. Generally the external form was symmetrical with a central section of accommodation containing the main entrance and two end bays of building that extended forward and beyond the rear of the central section. The ends of the building were often designed with gabled roofs.

The plan form follows a very similar pattern, whether the building is a convent or monastery school, or simply a convent or monastery. There is always a centrally located front entrance, sometimes with a gabled emphasis (*St Joseph's Coolgardie*) or under a colonnade (St. Mary's Convent fmr and St Brigid's Convent). Either side of the entrance hall, there are parlours and beyond the parlours on the alignment of the entrance hall, a stair to the upper level. At ground floor level, a long corridor runs the length of the central section, terminating on the end wings. The accommodation on the ground floor wings generally provides accommodation for the superiors and for the members of the order. At either end of the accommodation the rooms are larger and the planning of these elements differs from place to place. There is generally an oratory or chapel at one end at ground (St Mary's Convent fmr) or first floor (*Redemptorist Monastery* (RHP 02218) and St. Brigid's Convent (RHP 1976)), with one of the large room being a refectory, library, or in the case of convent or monastery schools, classrooms. Support facilities such as the kitchens are generally to the rear of one of the wings, or close by, with laundries in separate buildings. In some instances, there are front and rear verandahs (St. Mary's and *St. Brigid's*), while *St. Anthony's* (RHP 573) and the *Redemptorist Monastery* have only rear verandahs.

The buildings are generally two storeys in height, though *Redemptorist Monastery* is three storeys, as is the Convent of the Good Shepherd at West Leederville.

Later classroom blocks built prior to the post World War II period followed similar formal planning arrangements, with a central range of classrooms accessible from a rear verandah, and then twin classrooms at each end to complete the symmetry and to give them a similar external appearance to the earlier combined convent and classroom blocks.

Contemporary monastery and convent school building are designed to a similar style and are generally decorated in a sparing manner so that the building form, verandahs and rhythm of openings give it its characteristic appearance. *Redemptorist Monastery*, Convent of the Good Shepherd West Leederville, St Brigid's Convent, Loretto Nedlands (Place No. 13658) and St. Brigid's College in Lesmurdie are exceptions to this approach and make use of Gothic and Cape Dutch design element to render their elevations more picturesque.



The former *Convent of St. Mary's Convent fmr, Bunbury* (RHP 379) is also richly decorated externally, but now has a low degree of authenticity following its conversion to an art gallery.

Other convent schools included in the Register of Heritage Places include *Convent of Mercy, York* (RHP 2879), *Convent of Sacred Heart, Northampton* (RHP 1902), *Dominican Convent, Dongara* (RHP 1142), *St Joseph's Boulder* (RHP 190), *St Joseph's Albany* (RHP 1) and *St. Rita's Katanning* (RHP 1332). There are many other convents and the remains of convents that are yet to be assessed.

The convent and college buildings at *St Brigid's Group, Perth* fit with a general pattern of development for comparable institutions. The buildings are well detailed and restrained, with most of the decorative flourish being reserved for the stained glass leadlights, internal stairs and areas such as the oratory.

The buildings that make up the site of New Norcia are highly elaborate designs and employ a range of stylistic devices, with each building having its own clearly identifiable decorative approach.

The buildings that make up *St Brigid's Group, Perth* cover a broader range of styles that equivalent period convent schools and the number and scale of buildings achieved in the short period from foundation to 1921 represents a relatively large scale development in the convent school context in Western Australia.

#### **13.4 KEY REFERENCES**

Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Plan: Former St Brigid's Convent, John Street, Northbridge', prepared for the Building Management Authority, June 1994.

Palassis Architects, 'Conservation Report: St Brigid's Precinct, Aberdeen, Fitzgerald and John Streets, Northbridge', prepared for the Building Management Authority, September 1994.

Riley Hair Architecture Urban Design in association with Lucy Williams, Historian and Heritage Consultant, 'The former St Brigid's Primary School, Northbridge, Western Australia, Conservation Plan', prepared for Southern Cross Care Inc, August 2002.

#### **13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**