



HERITAGE  
COUNCIL  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

**DRAFT – Register Entry**

**Warning: The following content may be distressing to some readers.**

1. **DATA BASE No.** 2622
2. **NAME** *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia (1847+)*  
**FORMER NAME (or OTHER NAMES):** Central Mission, New Norcia Mission, New Norcia Mission for Aborigines, Benedictine Mission of New Norcia, Benedictine Abbey Nullius of New Norcia, Roman Catholic Mission of New Norcia, New Norcia Benedictine Monastery, Benedictine Monastery of New Norcia.
3. **LOCATION** New Norcia Road, (fmr Great Northern Highway) New Norcia
4. **DESCRIPTION OF PLACE INCLUDED IN THIS ENTRY**
  1. Melbourne Location 15 being part of the land described in Crown Enrolment 1720 and depicted in Memorial Book 27/540.  
Melbourne Location 29 being the whole of the land described in Crown Enrolment 1402 and depicted in Memorial Book 29/161  
Melbourne Location 72 being the whole of the land described in Crown Enrolment 2168 and depicted in Memorial Book 28/835  
Melbourne Location 74 being part of the land described in Crown Enrolment 2331 and depicted in Memorial Book 13/37  
Lot 11 on Deposited Plan 407521 being the whole of the land contained in Memorial Book 31/9  
Lot 173 on Deposited Plan 407522 being the whole of the land contained in Memorial Book 31/15;
  2. Portion of Lot 507 on Deposited Plan 54615 being part of the land contained in portion of Certificate of Title Volume 2696 Folio 486.  
Lot 334 on Deposited Plan 228008 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 1240 Folio 929.  
Lot 335 on Deposited Plan 228008 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 1 Folio 237.  
Portion of Lot 342 on Deposited Plan 228008 being part of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 1240 Folio 928.  
Lot 3345 on Deposited Plan 228311 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 1039 Folio 942.  
Lot 471 on Deposited Plan 246387 being the whole of the Land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 5 Folio 342.

Lot 450 on Deposited Plan 246400 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Title Volume 5 Folio 270.

Portion of Lot 55 on Deposited Plan 407518 being part of the land contained in portion of Certificate of Title Volume 4009 Folio 776.

Portion of Lot 56 on Deposited Plan 407519 being part of the land contained in portion of Certificate of Title Volume 4009 Folio 777.

Lot 393 on Deposited Plan 407522 being the whole of the land contained in Crown Land Record Volume 3174 Folio 3352;

3. Portions of roads and;

4. unallocated crown land

together as defined in Heritage Council of Western Australia curtilage map P2622-C.

**5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA** Shire of Victoria Plains

**6a. OWNER**

1. The Benedictine Community of New Norcia Inc.

2. Monochorum Ltd of Holy Trinity Abbey.

3. State of Western Australia (Responsible agency Shire of Victoria Plains).

4. State of Western Australia (Responsible Agency Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage).

**7. HERITAGE LISTINGS**

• Register of Heritage Places:		-----
• National Trust Classification:	Classified	6 May 1991-
• Town Planning Scheme:		-----
• Municipal Inventory:		-----
• Register of the National Estate:	Permanent	21 October 1980-
• Aboriginal Sites Register		
Individual Places		
20008 Gingin Brook Wagyl Site	Registered	
20749 Moore River Waugal 1	Registered	
21620 Chandala Brook #Duplicate of ID 3525	Registered	
20650 Lennard Brook	Lodged	
21616 Boonanarring Brook	Lodged	
21617 Wallering Brook	Lodged	
21618 Nullilla Brook	Lodged	
21619 Breera Brook	Lodged	

**8. ORDERS UNDER SECTION OF THE ACT**

-----

**9. HERITAGE AGREEMENT**

-----

## 10. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, a substantial monastic town set on the banks of the Moore River in a rural agricultural landscape comprising:

Bishop's Well (c.1850), Stone Well (n.d), Old Flour Mill (1850s), Monastery (1847+), Abbey Church (1861+), Cemetery (from c.1860), Mission Cottage (fmr) (c.1860s), Old Police Station (fmr) (c.1860), Blacksmith's Shop (1869), New Police Station (fmr Novitiate) (1876, 1961), New Flour Mill (1879), St Joseph's Girls School Group (1880+), St Gertrude's Girls College Group (fmr) (1906-08+), Trading Post (c.1912), St Ildephonsus' Boys College Group (fmr) (1908-14), Handball Courts and Arcades (c.1914), St Mary's Boys School Group (fmr) (1914), Apiary (1917, 1938-39), former New Norcia Hotel & Quarters (1925-26), Olive Workshop and Carpentry Workshop (1925-26), Roadhouse (1955), College Administration Building (fmr) (c.1930s), Machinery Sheds (n.d), Pig-Keeper's Cottage (fmr) (1936-37) & fmr Piggery (ruins) (c.1902), St Scholastica Administration Block (1967), Rosendo Salvado Monument (erected c.1970s), Mission Cottage Interpretation Centre (c.1960-70s), former Library and Science Building (1974), Entrance Gates (Monastery c.1903-05, St Gertrude's c.1920s), Perimeter Walls (1914, c.1920), Avenue of Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), together with associated roads, walking trails, mature tree plantings, olive groves, playing fields, former productive gardens and orchards, and archaeological sites, has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

the place is unique in Australia as a monastic town, having been founded in 1846 as a predominantly Spanish settlement of the Benedictine Order, and has operated as a self-contained Roman Catholic religious community from that time. As Spain has been the place of origin to date for only small numbers of immigrants to Australia, the place is exceedingly rare as a town demonstrating strong Spanish religious, social and cultural links from the nineteenth century to the present. Two of the Abbey bells, cast in Spain in 1843, are directly associated with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and are the only known extant examples from this period;

the place is a unique townscape on the former Great Northern Highway that is an iconic tourist destination and social landmark. The cruciform layout of the precinct, with one axis along the main road and the other aligned from the cemetery through to the Monastery gates, reinforces the religious symbolism of the town and its architecture and also reflects changes to the administration, focus and landscape brought about by Fulgentius Torres when he succeeded Salvado as second Abbot of New Norcia at the turn of the century;

the place was established as a bush mission to the local Yued Noongar population. The intent to provide education and care for Aboriginal children rather than non-Aboriginal children was unprecedented in Western Australia at the time and demonstrated a rare aspirational plan for the Yued Noongar people on behalf of Dom Salvado. The nineteenth century model comprised a European-styled Aboriginal village where housing and work was provided for families, and from the turn of the twentieth century evolved into an institutional model aimed particularly at Aboriginal children;

the place demonstrates the changing nature of the standard and style of care considered appropriate for Aboriginal children and families over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the site of systemic physical and sexual abuse of Aboriginal students during the 1950s to 1970s, as documented in the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the place demonstrates a pattern of behaviour of institutionalisation and abuse of Aboriginal children in Western Australia;

the place is important as an exemplifier of the Benedictine philosophy. The layout of individual buildings, the manner of their construction and appearance and their purpose was deliberately chosen to reflect the main tenets of the Benedictine Order. The unusually large complex of hand-crafted stone and brick buildings, the adoption of the use of new steam powered machinery for flour milling; as well as the community's facilities to undertake its own shoemaking, tailoring, bookbinding and printing, reflects the commitment to self-sufficiency that supports the distinctive way of life of the Benedictine community. The construction of the community guest hostel, later the New Norcia Hotel, and now currently used for hostel accommodation, similarly reflects the importance of hospitality in the Benedictine philosophy;

both individually and collectively, the buildings of the place display striking aesthetic characteristics. The Monastery, St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' Colleges, the former New Norcia Hotel, and the edifice and campanile of the Abbey Church are all well-detailed, finely crafted examples of their style. The Handball Courts and Arcades is a distinctive and striking example of the Federation Romanesque style applied to a sporting facility; and the two flour mills are good examples of industrial buildings in the Victorian Georgian style;

many of the buildings throughout the place feature excellent interior detailing, including fine timber work throughout, richly decorated pressed-metal ceilings in many buildings, coloured leadlight glazing to the College entry lobbies, the Byzantine-style decoration of the St Ildephonsus' College Chapel, the unusually ostentatious scale and form of the interior spaces of the former New Norcia Hotel, and the fine detail and craftsmanship of the original joinery and variety of pressed metal ceilings of St Gertrude's Chapel, where paintings, decorations on ceilings and walls and fine timber carving on the altar, create an integrated aesthetic whole.

the buildings include notable artwork, particularly murals by European trained Father Lesmes Lopez, and sgraffito artist John Kucik, and unique Art-Nouveau wood carving of Barcelona-trained John Casellas. The New Norcia Art Gallery houses a fine collection of Australian and European artwork, including an important textiles collection, known as 'The Spanish Collection'. The importance of the New Norcia art collections was emphasised by the 1986 theft of works by international art thieves. Other important elements include the 1922 custom-built Albert Moser organ, the tombs of Salvado (c.1903) and Torres (c.1914), and the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel;

the landscape of the place comprises a density and diversity of cultural features that illustrate the evolution of the place from a rough bush mission

to the present substantial monastic town. The layers of settlement are also reflected by the remnant plantings of nineteenth century agricultural crops and ornamental trees, including ceremonial plantings and Eucalypt avenues in the vicinity of Abbey Church, the Cemetery drive, and along the Monastery road; former orchards and productive gardens established between the Apiary and Monastery, including olive, pomegranate, almond and small flowering trees; and the c.1860s Olive Grove located north-east of the Monastery;

the Benedictine community at New Norcia was founded in 1846 by the charismatic and internationally recognised missionary priest Dom Rosendo Salvado, who became Bishop and led the community until his death in 1900. Following Salvado's death, the community was led by Dom Fulgentius Torres (1901-1914), who designed many of the buildings constructed in this period;

the place was an important educational provider for the regional area between 1908 and 1991, facilitating the construction of educational facilities in St Joseph's and St Mary's schools, followed by the St Gertrude's Girls College, and St Ildephonsus' Boys College, which were amalgamated in 1974 to create the coeducational Salvado College, later New Norcia Catholic College. The administration of St Gertrude's by the Sisters of St Joseph and St Ildephonsus' by the Marist Brothers, together with the resident Benedictine community, demonstrates a rare example of three Roman Catholic religious orders operating collaboratively from the same site; and

although acclaimed Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier assisted Bishop Torres with the design of St Ildephonsus', a considerable number of buildings in the place were designed and built by monks of the community, indicating a high level of technical competency in building design and construction techniques, despite little formal training.

The much-altered Trading Post (c.1912) and Roadhouse (1955), together with the St Scholastica Administration Block (1967), former Library and Science Building (1974) and Mission Cottage Interpretation Centre building are of little significance. The late twentieth century buildings to the rear of St Joseph's Girls School Group are also of little significance. Alterations and additions made to original buildings within the school and college groups since the c.1970s are of little significance.



HERITAGE  
COUNCIL  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

**DRAFT – Assessment Documentation**

**Warning: The following content may be distressing to some readers.**

**PLEASE NOTE: This Assessment Documentation is intended to provide sufficient information to consider the place for inclusion in the State Register.**

### 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Cultural heritage significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia.

In determining cultural heritage significance, the Heritage Council has had regard to the factors in the Heritage Act 2018 and the indicators adopted on 14 June 2019.

#### 11(a) Importance in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of Western Australia's history

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is associated with the long connection of the Yued people to the land, prior to the arrival of Spanish Benedictine monks, Joseph Benedict Serra and Rosendo Salvado, and which continued after the establishment of the New Norcia Native Mission on the banks of the Moore River in 1847.

The early establishment of the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, including the early pastoral exploitation of the area demonstrates the importance of water in the development of settlements in Western Australia. The early collaboration between Dom Salvado and the Yued Noongar people in the sharing of water sources and the subsequent construction of stone-lined wells by the monks reflects Salvado's commitment to a relationship with the Yued Noongar people, as well as the Benedictine philosophy. Bishop's Well, constructed circa 1850, is one of the earliest and largest surviving examples of the many stone pitch 'Monkish Wells' sunk in the district during Salvado's era.

The monks of the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* were among the first Europeans to settle in the district. The creation of a self-sufficient bush mission supported by orchards, garden and pastoral pursuits, evolved into a well-established pastoral and agricultural centre pivotal in the development of the surrounding region, producing resources utilised by local pastoralists and settlers, and providing educational and religious instruction to Aboriginal, and later non-Aboriginal, children.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* was first established as a bush mission to the local Yued Noongar population. The intent to provide education and care for Aboriginal children rather than non-Aboriginal children was unprecedented in Western Australia at the time, and demonstrated a rare aspirational plan for the Yued Noongar people on behalf of Salvado. The nineteenth century model comprised a European-styled Aboriginal village where housing and work was provided for families, and from the turn of the twentieth century evolved into an institutional model aimed particularly at Aboriginal children. The place demonstrates the changing nature of the standard and style of care considered appropriate for Aboriginal children and families over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* was an important educational provider for the regional area between 1908 to 1991. The administration of St Gertrude's, which was operated by the Sisters of St Joseph, and St Ildephonsus' by the Marist Brothers, together with the resident Benedictine community provided religious and educational guidance to generations of young Western Australians.

As the site of systemic physical and sexual abuse of Aboriginal and other students during the 1950s to 1970s, as documented in the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, demonstrates a pattern of behaviour of institutionalisation and abuse of Aboriginal children in Western Australia. The 2022 sale of property to fund redress to survivors of abuse and the 2020 installation of the Rock of Remembrance reflects actions undertaken by the Community to offer acknowledgement and apology.

The buildings and elements dating from the period under Salvado lend a distinctive architectural character to the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. The construction of the buildings by the monks, laypeople and skilled craftsmen, using locally sourced construction materials, hand hewn timber, and stone collected from fields, with Spanish influence, are all reflective of the Benedictine philosophy and Salvado's vision for the mission.

The landscape of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprises a density and diversity of cultural features that illustrate the evolution of the place from a rough bush mission to the present substantial monastic town. The range of features includes the cruciform layout of the area, which remains a key feature of the precinct; pastoral and farming features, including wells, the fences, walls and gates that enclosed the key religious buildings; external statues, internal artworks and religious features; and archaeological sites. The layers of settlement are also reflected by the remnant plantings of nineteenth century agricultural crops and plantings of ornamental trees, including remnant ceremonial plantings between the Cemetery and Abbey Church; former orchards and productive gardens established between the Apiary and Monastery, comprising olive trees, a mature pomegranate, an almond tree, small flowering trees and a Tamarisk; and the Olive Grove located north-east of the Monastery, comprising a mature grove planted from the c.1860s and used in olive oil production from the 1880s which continues today.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* was the site of the largest art theft in Western Australia, with the theft of 26 paintings from New Norcia's European Art Gallery, taken during a daylight robbery, 25 of which were eventually found, though

damaged, and later returned after restoration. The theft reflects the importance of the New Norcia art collection.

The painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel in the Abbey Church at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, presented to Salvado by Father (later Saint) Vincent Pallotti in 1845, is associated with one of New Norcia's most famous stories, in which the Mission was saved from approaching fire, when Salvado prayed before the flames with the painting.

#### **11(b) Importance in demonstrating rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of Western Australia's heritage**

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is unique in Australia as a monastic town, having been founded in 1846 as a predominantly Spanish settlement of the Benedictine Order, and has operated as a self-contained Roman Catholic religious community from that time. As Spain has been the place of origin to date for only small numbers of immigrants to Australia, the place is exceedingly rare as a town demonstrating strong Spanish religious, social and cultural links from the nineteenth century to the present (2022). Two of the four original Abbey Bells, cast in Spain for the Milicia Nacional in 1843 and supplied to the Norcia Mission in 1879/1880, are directly associated with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and are the only known extant examples of their type.

The formal layout of the main buildings in a cruciform alignment, comprising the Monastery to the east and the Cemetery to the west, with the Church, and St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' Colleges across the middle, is a meditative and purposeful reflection of the Benedictine philosophy, which has influenced the construction and operation of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* from 1847 to the present. The unusually large complex of hand-crafted stone and brick buildings reflects the commitment to self-sufficiency that supports the distinctive way of life of the Benedictine community.

The administration of St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprised a rare example of three Roman Catholic religious orders, the Benedictine community, the Australian Sisters of St Joseph, and the Marist Brothers, operating collaboratively from the same location.

The construction of the community guest hostel for parents of College students and other visitors to *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* in 1927 reflected the importance of hospitality in the Benedictine philosophy. In 1957, the building was renamed, and the monastery became the first religious organisation in Western Australia to be granted a hotel licence, for the New Norcia Hotel and Quarters (fmr).

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprises a rare collection of architecturally diverse buildings, which individually and collectively reflect a high standard of craftsmanship. The Handball Courts and Arcades demonstrate the unusual application of the Federation Romanesque style to a sporting facility.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprises a rare collection of structures, and relics of considerable religious and cultural importance to the Benedictine community, including the early textiles and vestments collection known as 'The Spanish Collection'. The 1922 extension to the Abbey Church accommodates the custom-built Albert Moser organ, with German-crafted fine oak



casework, imported from Europe and one of only two in Australia. Significant relics include Salvado's white Carrera marble tomb (c.1903), Torres' marble tomb (c. 1914), the Stations of the Cross sgraffito inside the Abbey Church nave (c.1957)<sup>1</sup>; and the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel, bestowed on Salvado by Father (later Saint) Vincent Pallotti in 1845, and associated with one of New Norcia's most famous stories.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprises a considerable collection of fine artworks located in the New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery, chapels and other buildings across the precinct, created by monks, lay people and craftsmen at the monastery and from all over the world. Significant artworks include the 16th century 'Head of an Apostle' cartoon thought to have been commissioned by Pope Leo X for inclusion in tapestry held at the Vatican, which is the only one of its kind in Australia and held in the European Art Gallery. The Contemporary Australian Gallery is the only known collection dedicated to Judaeo-Christian art in Australia, including artworks such as Julie Dowling's 'Born for you', which features rare imagery of the Mother Mary and Baby Jesus as Aboriginal, and which won the 2000 Mandorla Award.

**11(c) Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Western Australia's history;**

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has, through investigation of surface and sub-surface archaeology, the potential to reveal information regarding the construction phases at New Norcia, as well as aesthetic and other features of the earlier religious, residential, agricultural and ancillary structures of the mission town.

The ruins, foundations and sub-surface archaeological deposits associated with the former Mission Cottage sites have importance for the potential to provide information not available from any other source regarding the way of life for the Aboriginal people who lived and worked in and around the Mission during the period 1847 to 1891.

The archaeology of the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, including the sub-floor deposits of the extant buildings, has importance for the potential to provide information on the way of life of the Benedictine priests, brothers, school students, lay people, craftsmen and other occupants across the precinct.

As reported in the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, child sexual abuse on Aboriginal children occurred at St Mary's Orphanage for Aboriginal boys and St Joseph's Orphanage for Aboriginal girls at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* from the 1950s until they closed in 1974. In understanding the way in which the legacies of past social policies and practices, the Stolen Generations and the long-term intergenerational impacts of colonisation, all increase Aboriginal children's vulnerability to abuse in institutions, the place has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of this type of abuse, how to acknowledge the abuse and its repercussions, and how to prevent it in the future in other institutional and religious settings.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is of considerable importance to the community of Western Australia as a source of information and knowledge regarding the history of the place and the considerable art collections, including The Spanish Collection.

**11(d) Its importance in demonstrating the characteristics of a broader class of places;**

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is important as an example of a monastic town established and functioning under the Benedictine faith and philosophy for over 150 years. The layout of individual buildings, the manner of their construction and appearance and their purpose was deliberately chosen to reflect the main tenets of the Benedictine Order and also reflect the changes to the administration, focus and landscape of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* brought about by Fulgentius Torres when he succeeded Salvado as second Abbot of New Norcia at the turn of the century.

The religious buildings and religious paraphernalia associated with *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, in particular the Monastery and the Abbey Church, are excellent representative examples of the traditions of Catholic worship, containing all the internal elements common to Catholic tradition, with specific regard to the early influences of the Spanish Catholic Church and the Benedictine Order.

The orphanages and educational buildings at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, in particular, St Joseph's Girls School Group, comprising St Joseph's School and Orphanage for Aboriginal girls and associated convent and educational buildings, and the Education Centre associated with the former St Mary's School and Orphanage for Aboriginal boys, are substantial representative examples of the type of institutions established for the care and education of Aboriginal children, including those that were not orphaned, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The buildings are representative of a number of similar facilities for Aboriginal children established and maintained by religious institutions in Western Australia and Australia.

The educational buildings at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, in particular St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges established in the Torres era, are excellent examples of religious educational buildings and are recognised as early examples of boys and girls boarding schools in Western Australia.

The industrial buildings at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, including the nineteenth century Old Flour Mill and the New Flour Mill, are good examples of industrial buildings in the Victorian Georgian style.

The formal layout of the main buildings in a cruciform alignment, comprising the Monastery to the east and the Cemetery to the west, with the Abbey Church, and St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges across the middle, is a meditative and purposeful reflection of the Benedictine philosophy, which has influenced the construction and operation of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* from 1847 to the present. The unusually large complex of hand-crafted stone and brick buildings reflects the commitment to self-sufficiency that supports the distinctive way of life of the Benedictine community.

The construction of the community guest hostel, later New Norcia Hotel, for parents of College students and other visitors to *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New*

*Norcia* in 1927, and the ongoing use of the former Hotel and the more recent Monastery Guesthouse for visitor accommodation, reflects the importance of hospitality in the Benedictine philosophy.

**11(e) Any strong or special meaning it may have for any group or community because of social, cultural or spiritual associations;**

As reported in the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, a considerable number of Aboriginal survivors have reported instances of child sexual abuse at St Mary's Orphanage for Aboriginal boys and St Joseph's Orphanage for Aboriginal girls at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* between 1950 and 1974. For these people, the place has considerable meaning as the location of abuse with catastrophic repercussions, and as the place in which the abuse has been acknowledged by the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

The 2020 Rock of Remembrance, installed by the Community, is an acknowledgement and apology to people that experienced neglect or abuse at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

The religious artwork, vestments, relics, statues and art collections within the European Art Gallery and the Contemporary Australian Art Gallery, and the Chapel buildings at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* are highly valued for religious and aesthetic reasons by the Benedictine Community and Catholic Church and contribute significantly to the community's sense of place.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is highly valued as a religious, educational and cultural institution by many Western Australians who attended St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges, later Salvado College, and New Norcia Catholic College, or attended camps or retreats at the precinct.

The New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery art collections within the European Art Gallery and the Contemporary Australian Art Gallery, and other public buildings within the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, are highly valued and held in esteem by the religious, artistic and broader Western Australian community and visitors to the State.

**11(f)<sup>2</sup> Its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by any group or community;**

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is a unique townscape on the former Great Northern Highway that is an iconic tourist destination and social landmark.

---

<sup>2</sup> 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.

The layout and fabric of the townsite in its landscape context has been greatly influenced by the Benedictine philosophy and way of life. The early mission buildings were planned and laid out in the form of a Latin cross, with the Monastery at the foot of the cross to the east, the Abbey Church in the middle, the two colleges, St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus', at the end of each arm of the cross, and the Cemetery at the apex to the west. Symbolically, the sun rises over the Monastery to the east and sets over the Cemetery to the west. Today, the east-west axis of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* extends eastwards across the river to terminate at the apiary, and westwards beyond the college precinct to terminate at the rocky hilltop overlooking the precinct.

Both individually and collectively, the buildings of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* display striking aesthetic characteristics. The Monastery, St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges, New Norcia Hotel (fmr) and the edifice and campanile of the Abbey Church are all well-detailed, finely crafted examples of their style. The Handball Courts and Arcades is a distinctive and striking example of the Federation Romanesque style applied to a sporting facility.

The buildings designed under Torres' stewardship of the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* form a dominant and recognisable feature of the townscape. Architecturally the buildings retain the classical style in form and symmetry established by Salvado, while reflecting a move towards more flourish and decoration. The use of locally made bricks, complemented by stucco mouldings, corrugated iron roofing and new contemporary materials such as steel, iron and glass, contrasted with traditional materials such as imported hardware and tiles from Spain, reflecting the Benedictine tenets of self-sufficiency, use of available resources, as well as Torres' Spanish influences. A significant and visual change was the increased emphasis on formality with regard to the access to and circulation of spaces. More attention was also placed on the interior finishes and fittings, with pressed metal ceilings, painted wall decorations especially religious imagery, ornate carvings particularly in the public spaces and places of worship.

Many of the buildings of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* feature excellent interior detailing, including fine timber work throughout, richly decorated pressed-metal ceilings in many buildings, the Byzantine-style decoration of the St Ildephonsus' College Chapel, the unusually ostentatious scale and form of the interior spaces of New Norcia Hotel (fmr), and the fine detail of craftsmanship of original joinery and variety of pressed metal ceilings of St Gertrude's Chapel, where paintings, decorations on ceilings and walls and fine timber carving on the altar, create an integrated aesthetic whole.

The use of fences, walls and gates to create several distinct enclosed compounds throughout *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is a visual representation of the deliberate separation between the structures and individual functions. These include the cloistered compound of the Monastery precinct, the separately walled compounds of St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges, reflecting the separation between the two genders, the low-walled compound of St Joseph's Girls School Group and the timber fenced confines of the Abbey Church square.

The buildings of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* include notable artwork, particularly murals by European trained Father Lesmes Lopez, and sgraffito artist John Kucik, and unique Art-Nouveau wood carving of Barcelona-trained John Casellas. The New Norcia Art Gallery houses a fine collection of

Australian and European artwork, including an important textiles collection (the Spanish Collection) and the only known collection dedicated to Judaeo-Christian art in Australia, collated with acquisitions from the annual Mandoorla Art Prize for religious art and its associated national exhibition. The art collections are highly valued and held in esteem by the religious, artistic and broader Western Australian community and visitors to the State.

**11(g) Any special association it may have with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in Western Australia's history;**

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is closely associated with the two founding fathers, Joseph Benedict Serra and the charismatic and internationally recognised missionary priest Rosendo Salvado, who became Bishop and led the community until his death in 1900. Salvado, and his successor Fulgentius Torres (1901-1914), are responsible for the existing layout of the main buildings in the precinct and were important figures in the history of the only European monastery in Western Australia. Bernard Rooney (1971-1980) was the first Australian-born abbot at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is closely associated with the artists and craftsmen who have had significant impacts on the design, construction and decoration of the collection of architecturally diverse buildings, including Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier of Barcelona, Abbott and designer Fulgentius Torres, European-trained painter and sgraffito artist Father Lesmes Lopez, Barcelona-trained wood carver John Casellas, and sgraffito artist John Kucik.

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is associated with the provision of working and vocational opportunities for Aboriginal women. On the opening of the Post and Telegraph Office following the extension of telegraph line to New Norcia in 1873, Aboriginal woman Mary Helen Cuper remained first telegraphist and post-mistress until her death by tuberculosis in 1877. In the 1960s, Yued Noongar woman, Veronica Willaway, was professed as an oblate nun, becoming the second Aboriginal women in the congregation to join the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of New Norcia, after Sister Cecilia Farrell.

**11(h) Its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement;**

The *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* comprises a rare collection of architecturally diverse buildings, which individually and collectively reflect a high standard of craftsmanship, including the involvement of Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier of Barcelona in the construction of St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges. The design, construction and decoration of the colleges (St Gertrude's, St Ildephonsus') by master builders, artists and craftsmen from the monastic community represents both creative and technical accomplishment.

While acclaimed Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier assisted Bishop Torres with the design of St Ildephonsus', other buildings within *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* were designed and built by monks of the community,

indicating a high level of technical competency in building design and construction techniques, despite little formal training.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is important as an exemplifier of the Benedictine philosophy. From the early establishment of the mission, the monastery continuously strove to use the best skills and materials available, including utilising new technology for efficient and effective management of resources. This is demonstrated in the early adoption of the use of new steam powered machinery for flour milling, supporting the only macaroni manufacturing capability in the state. During Abbot Catalan's period, the high level of technical and creative excellence displayed by the mission is exemplified in the community undertaking its own shoemaking, tailoring, bookbinding and printing.

The commitment to high quality craftsmanship and high-quality produce at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is reflected by the esteem held by the New Flour Mill during its operation as the oldest functioning flour mill in Western Australia from the 1879s until the 1980s and including its use as New Norcia's commercial bakehouse in the 1990s.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is recognised for its long-time production of multi award winning olive oil from trees planted from nineteenth century European cuttings and bottled within the Olive Workshop.

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1 CONDITION**

Overall *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is in fair to good condition, although condition varies across the precinct, depending on the location, age and type of building and whether it continues to serve a functional purpose or not. Despite the Benedictine community's ongoing commitment to building maintenance and conservation works, the challenges of maintaining such an extensive building inventory are evident in the wear and tear on the fabric in most buildings. In particular, the locally made red brick perimeter walls and red brick buildings show evidence of erosion due to chronic rising damp and salt attack, with some fabric now in very poor condition. Paint finishes, particularly to external timber joinery elements require maintenance.

Buildings that remain in use or that have been the subject of conservation works are generally in good condition. This includes: the Monastery, Abbey Church, Apiary, New Four Mill, Blacksmith's Shop, Mission Cottage (fmr), New Norcia Hotel (fmr), Pig-Keeper's Cottage, St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges, St Mary's School Group (fmr), College Administration Building, and much of St Joseph's Girls School Group.

The New Flour Mill, Old Police Station, New Police Station, Roadhouse, and the Olive Workshop and Carpenter's Workshop, are in fair to good condition, having suffered more from exposure to the elements, general wear and tear and sub-optimal use. The Hotel Quarters, Trading Post, St Scholastica Administration Block, former Library and Science Building (1974) and many of the St Joseph's group ancillary buildings are in fair to poor condition.

Bishop's Well, together with the other stone wells and cisterns located throughout the precinct, remain in sound condition despite no longer being in operational use.

## 12.2 INTEGRITY

This section explains the extent to which the fabric is in its original state.

Overall *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has a moderate to high degree of integrity, although integrity varies across the precinct, depending on the location, age and type of building and whether it continues to serve a functional purpose or not.

Of the compounds forming part of the original Latin cross layout of the precinct, the Cemetery, Monastery and Abbey Church have the highest degree of integrity, with much of the original form, layout and landscape setting largely intact. This is despite the loss of early mission building stock including the nineteenth century mission cottage village and associated civic buildings from around the Church square. Large scale additions to the school and college compounds, including classroom blocks, toilet blocks and other ancillary buildings, have reduced the overall integrity of these compounds over time.

Individually, although many of the buildings in the precinct have been significantly added to, or transformed, over time, most retain a moderate to high degree of integrity, with their original form, structure and landscape surrounds still extant. This has generally allowed for a clear expression of the original design intent. The stuccoed and face brick facades of the Torres-era buildings, although more visually dominant now within the precinct than the earlier Salvado-era mud and granite fieldstone buildings, retain a high degree of integrity relevant to the era of change. Where face brick facades have been painted over, the red oxide colour selection has maintained a red brick-like appearance. Where earlier Salvado-era fieldstone buildings remain, these have either been rendered or painted over, and the shingle roofs have been replaced with corrugated iron, resulting in a lower degree of integrity relevant to the earlier fabric. The notable exception is the Abbey Church which demonstrates the evolving approach to the architecture of the precinct through the contrasting form, fabric and decorative treatments of the different eras.

## 12.3 AUTHENTICITY

This section explains the extent to which the original intention is evident, and the compatibility of current use.

Overall *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has a moderate to high degree of authenticity, although authenticity varies across the precinct, depending on the location, age and type of building and whether it continues to serve a functional purpose or not.

The original Monastery orchards and gardens, and Apiary landscape, which are now devoid of most of their original productive plantings, are of low authenticity. The mature Olive Grove to the northeast, which continues to produce olives processed annually for olive oil, is of high authenticity.

The original Latin cross layout of the town envisaged under Salvado, remains clear in the alignment of the principal roads and pathways and in the axial placement of the Cemetery, Abbey Church, Monastery, Apiary, and St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges. The original intent for these places is clearly evident in the form, fabric and layout of the buildings, and they maintain a high degree of authenticity.

Elsewhere, changes to place layouts and the fabric of individual elements over time, although reflective of the continuing and changing needs of the place as a Monastic town, and of the sequence of development and evolution of the place, has in some case confused original intent. The St Mary's Boys School Group and the St Joseph's Girls School Group are examples of this, where the original functional relationships between the courtyard buildings is not immediately apparent, resulting in reduced authenticity.

The autonomy and self-reliance of the Benedictine Order is physically manifest in the fabric of many of the functionally redundant buildings, which have been successively repurposed over time for other uses. For these places, which include the Old Flour Mill, Mission Cottage (fmr), Old Police Station, New Police Station, Old Courthouse, and Mission Cottage Interpretation Centre, the original intent is difficult to discern and authenticity is reduced.

The removal of institutionalised care and educational services and the declining population of ageing monks has brought about the redundancy of many of the buildings. The St Mary's and St Joseph's school groups and the St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' colleges, whilst still largely intact are no longer in use for their original purpose. Occasional recreational, educational and passive tourism uses now prevail, which for the most part is highly compatible with the original intent. Through its various accommodation and informal educational and tour opportunities, the precinct continues to serve its long-time hospitality function as a spiritual retreat for visitors to New Norcia and the Victoria Plains district.

Most of the former working buildings, including the Apiary, Blacksmith's Shop, Olive Workshop and Carpentry Workshop, Old Flour Mill, and New Flour Mill, have not been operational for many years. However, conservation and interpretation outcomes for these places has ensured that the original intent remains clear. Olive Oil processing and bottling continues to occur annually at the Olive Workshop and bread-making activities are still performed within the Machinery Sheds.



### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place has been prepared by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage based on documentary evidence completed by Helen Munt of Extent Heritage Pty Ltd in June 2021 and December 2021, and a desktop physical evidence assessment completed by the Department in March 2022, with amendments and/or additions by the Heritage Council and the Department.

The supporting documentation does not aim to give a full history of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, nor a full description of its components. For further information, refer to the documents in the Key References in Section 13.4.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The town of New Norcia, located 132kms north of Perth in the Shire of Victoria Plains, is the only monastic town in Australia, founded by Benedictine Monks from Spain with the purpose to establish a bush mission to minister to the local Yued Noongar people. Since its establishment and through to its continued use and habitation in 2022, *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has been a place of first contact, a mission, a monastery, a farming and pastoral enterprise, a self-sufficient township, a hub of cultural and artistic endeavour, a provider of education and a place of spiritual retreat. It is a place that reflects and represents the merging of as well as the divisions between the Traditional Owners and European migrants and the attempts of the Europeans to impose many of their own values, spiritual beliefs and social systems into the landscape and livelihoods of the Aboriginal people in the years of European colonisation of Western Australia from the 1840s to 1970s.

##### **Aboriginal History**

Archaeological evidence suggests Aboriginal people have occupied Australia for at least 65,000 years.<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal people believe the connection is much longer.

New Norcia is situated in the region traditionally inhabited by the Yued<sup>4</sup> people, one of 14 dialectic groups of Noongar Aboriginal Australians. The Yued region, covering an area of approximately 29,000 square kilometres, also includes the towns of Leeman, Jurien Bay, Cervantes, Two Rocks, Toodyay, Gingin, Calingiri, Dalwallinu, Coorow and Moora.<sup>5</sup>

Being situated next to the banks of the 'Maura' or 'Maur', later Moore, River, early references to the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* place it in the area of Maura or the Maura-Maura valley.<sup>6</sup> The Moore River was a significant water source for the Yued Noongar.<sup>7</sup> There are a number of other significant sites in the

---

<sup>3</sup> The National Museum of Australia, 2021, Source: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/evidence-of-first-peoples#:~:text=Aboriginal%20occupation,of%20Europe%20and%20the%20Americas>, accessed May 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Anthropologist Norman Tindale identified the Aboriginal people living along the Moore River as 'Yuat' or 'Juat'. See Tindale, N. B., *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, University of California Press, 1974.' Consistent with the South West Land and Sea Council, the endonym 'Yued' is used throughout this assessment.

<sup>5</sup> Kaartdijin Noongar Sharing Noongar Knowledge, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/yued/>

<sup>6</sup> *West Australian*, 5 January 1933.

<sup>7</sup> Drayton, Margaret, "Maur/Mer Goombar" cited in Community Arts Network, *Kep Gabi: Stories from Yued Country, Place Names Moora*, 2020, p. 33.

Yued region. These include caves, some of which are the homes of mythological beings, ceremonial sites, rock art, paintings and artefacts.<sup>8</sup>

Aboriginal people lived virtually undisturbed in the area until the late 1830s, when colonial settlers began exploring the region. The establishment of the Aboriginal mission at New Norcia had a profound effect on the lives of the local Aboriginal people the Yued people of the Noongar nation.

### ***Early colonial settlement of the region***

The earliest British explorations of the Victoria Plains district occurred in 1836 with an expedition in which George Fletcher Moore became the first European to traverse and follow the Maura River, later renamed the Moore River, upstream to a point around Noondagoonda, close to the future site of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

Between 1841 and 1845, land in the district taken up by the earliest settlers to area, Captain John Sculley and James Drummond and sons, was used mainly for sheep grazing under the care of Aboriginal shepherds employed by the early settlers.

The Victoria Plains Road District was gazetted on 24 January 1871, with an original area extending as far east as the South Australian border. The later introduction of the *Local Government Act 1960* saw the district as it is in 2021 (with New Norcia situated in the centre) renamed the Shire of Victoria Plains on 1 July 1961.

### ***Arrival of the Benedictine Monks in Western Australia***

The Swan River Colony, founded in 1829, was without a Catholic priest until December 1843, when Father John Brady was sent to Perth by Church authorities at the request of early Catholic colonists. Two years later, on 9 May 1845, Brady was appointed the first Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Perth.

Following a recruitment drive to Europe, Brady returned to Western Australia on 8 January 1846 with 27 missionaries, including two Spanish Benedictine monks, Joseph Benedict Serra and Rosendo Salvado.

The Benedictines are part of a religious order within the Roman Catholic Church known as the Order of St Benedict (OSB). The first Benedictine community was established in Italy in the sixth century by St Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547).<sup>9</sup> Benedictine monks live in small, autonomous communities, known as monasteries, usually under the absolute rule of an elected Abbot. Benedictines base their life on the Rule of St Benedict, which prioritises a communal life based on a balance of prayer, productive labour and intellectual pursuits, including literature, art, and music.<sup>10</sup>

Charged with establishing a 'Mission of the Centre' north of Perth for the purpose of 'civilising and converting' the Aboriginal people in an area unsettled by Europeans, Salvado and Serra set out with small party of lay brothers in February 1846. Entering the Victoria Plains district, they made contact with an encampment of local Aboriginal people, gaining their trust. On 1 March 1846 they established the first mission camp beside a freshwater spring, Noondagoonda Pool, approximately

---

<sup>8</sup> Kaartdijin Noongar Sharing Noongar Knowledge, South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/yued/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.osb.org/our-roots/the-rule/>, accessed 17 March 2022

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au/monastery/benedictine-life/rule-of-st-benedict>, accessed 17 March 2022

eight kilometres north of the future site of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

Crop planting commenced however the land was soon found to be already under lease to another party, forcing Salvado and Serra to seek another location for the mission, on the north bank of Moore River, which would evolve to become *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

The following timeline focuses on key events and phases associated with the construction and operation of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, from its initial establishment as a bush mission in the mid-nineteenth century through to its current recognition in the twenty-first century as Australia's only monastic town and tourism destination of note. It also addresses key historical figures and events associated with the place.

### **Phase I - Early mission period (1847-1860s)**

The early period under Salvado and Serra saw a self-sufficient bush mission established around productive orchards and gardens, with undeveloped land on both sides of the river used to support grazing and other pastoral pursuits. The settlement was named New Norcia, after Norcia (or Nursia) in central Italy, the birthplace of St Benedict, founder of the Benedictine monastic order.

Building activities in this period were undertaken by the monks, occasionally assisted by lay persons and skilled craftsmen from Perth or Northam. Buildings were hand constructed using locally sourced materials, namely natural granite fieldstones, mud plaster and limewash for walls; rough-hewn tree trunks or bush poles for structural timbers; thatched or split timber shingled roofs; and wooden floorboards and joinery cut from local trees.

**1847** Mission founded on north bank of Moore River, becoming known as New Norcia Native Mission, after Norcia, or Nursia, in central Italy, birthplace of St Benedict, founder of Benedictine monastic order.

Foundation stone for the mission's first substantial building, Mission House (no longer extant), laid on 1 March, completed 26 April 1847. Comprised chapel, refectory and dormitory for monks. Later used as a guesthouse, before being demolished c.1901 to make way for monastery's new central wing.

Serra sets out for Perth to secure title deeds, formerly taking possession of 26 acres of land on 28 April. Cultivation commences, with gardens and orchards on the south side of the Moore River, and a vineyard, established.

Aboriginal people begin setting up camps around mission settlement.

Institutional care and education of Aboriginal children commences, with first residential school for Aboriginal boys, St Mary's, operating from December 1847, initially from a small thatch hut.

**1848** Salvado (1814-1900) appointed first abbot of New Norcia, on 18 August 1848.

Growing encroachment of colonists in area, especially local shepherds, who are viewed as a threat and disruption.

Serra departs to Europe for funding and recruitment drive with seven-year-old Benedict 'Benito' Upumera, the first Yued Noongar boy to be baptised at New Norcia, and the first of six Aboriginal boys to leave Western Australia in the company of the Benedictine monks of New Norcia, with the hope of laying the foundations of an Aboriginal priesthood at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* upon their return.<sup>11</sup> Upumera dies in Rome in 1849 without returning to mission.

Assisted by monks and drawing on knowledge of local Aboriginal people, Salvado explores and surveys surrounding land, drafting up numerous plans for properties, wells and roads.<sup>12</sup> By May 1848 mission has 18,000 acres under lease.

Salvado continues work on the mission, erecting buildings, constructing a road and bridge over the Moore River; planting and harvesting wheat and starting up shearing.

- 1849** Salvado departs to Europe in January with Aboriginal boys Francis Xavier Conaci and John Baptist Dirimera. Mission's education services suspended.
- 1850** Serra returns from Europe with 39 new missionary priests and skilled workmen. Construction activities recommence under Serra in Salvado's absence.
- c.1850** ***Bishop's Well*** constructed, one of many stone pitch 'Monkish Wells'<sup>13</sup> sunk in the district during Salvado's era, and one of the earliest and largest surviving examples in district.
- Two-storey ***Old Flour Mill*** (c.1850), oldest remaining building at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, constructed north of monastery, together with nearby stables and wool press (no longer extant).
- 1853** Salvado brings back three swarms of bees from Europe for use in mission's early honey production.
- c.1854** Olive trees planting commences c.1854 using cuttings taken in Europe; extensive planting established by c.1860s, with olive oil production occurring from c.1880s.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Inquirer* 23 February 1848, cited in Green, Neville, and Lois Tilbrook (eds), *Aborigines of New Norcia 1845-1914, The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol. VII, University of Western Australia Press, 1989, p. xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Bertinshaw, Ross, "Holy Waters: the development of criteria for the identification of the monkish wells of New Norcia in colonial Western Australia, in *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, 34, 2016, p.69. Many of these early plans are held in the New Norcia archives.

<sup>13</sup> More than 200 wells were constructed by monks c.1850 to c.1900. According to Bertinshaw, a well is defined as monkish if it located on land that was owned by the Benedictine community, it is constructed to a standard design, it is built with good quality stone lining, it is sited near a water source such as a creek bed with flat grazing land nearby. In Bertinshaw, Ross, "Holy Waters: the development of criteria for the identification of the monkish wells of New Norcia in colonial Western Australia, in *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, 34, 2016, p. 72. Wells were located in groups: at the main mission at New Norcia, at the mission farm at Wyening near Bolgart and at the Marah Mission Settlement outstation.

**1856-60s** Salvado takes up additional land at nearby Wyening to help provide food and income for the mission; vineyards established, (later sold c.1970s). Winery constructed later, 1914-16, under Torres.

Construction of **Abbey Church** commences, with earliest cruciform section built 1861 to replace earlier wooden structure (no longer extant). Western choir extension and north and south sacristy infills added c.1870s.

**Cemetery** laid out c.1857, with small chapel built on ridge of hill to west; first burials from c.1860.

Construction of **Mission Cottages** commences c.1854 for Aboriginal families servicing mission. Cottages laid out in church square 'in quadrangles defined by post and rail fences'<sup>14</sup> numbering approximately 20 cottages by 1882.

Oldest surviving section of Monastery, lower 2-storey section of north wing, constructed c.1857-59; north wing third storey added later in c.1900.

Productive garden, laundry and workshop established east of Monastery.

First police station, later **Old Police Station**, established c.1860 in small house at north-east end of town settlement.

New, more substantial residential school for Aboriginal boys, **St Mary's School and Orphanage** built, 1860.

Local Aboriginal population decimated by disease. Mission's education focus broadens to take on Aboriginal children from all over the State.

**1859** Monastery of New Norcia granted autonomy on 1 April 1859.

**1861** Mission's first residential school for Aboriginal girls, **St Joseph's School and Orphanage**, opens in simple rectangular timber and thatch building at southern end of settlement.

**1867** New Norcia designated Abbey Nullius and Prefecture Apostolic by His Holiness Pope Pius IX on 12 March.<sup>15</sup>

Bob Nogolgot becomes first Aboriginal man from mission to be granted a cottage and small plot of land (15 acres) at New Norcia, rent free, for his exclusive farming use in 1867. Soon followed by Benedict Cuper, Tom Yawel, and Albert Turgiel.<sup>16</sup>

**Blacksmith's Shop** built on intersection of Old Perth to Geraldton Road and Farm Road c.1867, replacing earlier smithy destroyed by fire.

**1869-70** Number of monks reaches its peak of more than 70 monks.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia: St Gertrude's Chapel' interim Conservation Plan, prepared for Benedictine community of New Norcia, December 1996, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> 'New Norcia Mission', The Western Mail, 10 June 1905, p.45.

<sup>16</sup> Russo, George, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness: The Life and Times of Bishop Salvado*, Melbourne, 1980, p. 154.

<sup>17</sup> As advised by Father David Barry, May 2022.

## **Phase II - Expansion and consolidation under Salvado, 1870s-1890s**

During this period the mission was significantly expanded by Salvado, evolving into a substantial mission farm and self-sufficient township.

This second wave of development also saw a change in architectural character, reflecting the change in construction methods and new materials as well as the growing skills of the Aboriginal workers and the number of missionaries now available. With the establishment of a brickmaking facility, bricks largely replaced the use of the local fieldstone, and rather than bush poles, timber was now square sawn to make joists, rafters and floorboards. Most materials were still sourced and made on site. As a result, the buildings of this phase were larger, more robust and with greater architectural detailing.

By 1899, *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* had become a well-established pastoral and agricultural centre, grading wheat, bran, corn and testing macaroni and wheat as well as producing olive oil, wine, fruit, tobacco, honey and breeding turkeys, pigs, horses and sheep.

**c.1870s** Aboriginal student numbers reach 50. St Joseph's and St Mary's extended, ancillary buildings added, fenced enclosures built.

Additions to monastery: new 2-storey south wing constructed, 1870; new Novitiate added to north wing, 1870.

**1874** Additions to monastery: Garrido Hall built north of main building.

**1875** Mission village expands south of church square, with up to 20 dwellings by 1875. Cottages laid out in three neat rows within fenced lots.

**c.1876** Courthouse built on hill overlooking town at the northern end, oriented to form imposing focal point.

Post and Telegraph Office opens, following extension of telegraph line to New Norcia in 1873. Aboriginal woman Helen Cuper appointed first telegraphist and post-mistress, running small post office adjoining her house, until her death by tuberculosis in 1877.

Two-storey Novitiate, later ***New Police Station***, built north of church square to accommodate 11 novice monks.

**1879** Wheat production booms. New 3-storey ***New Flour Mill*** constructed, with two pairs of stones by Ransome and Sims. Old flour mill stripped of equipment and used as general farm building, barn, and occasionally for concerts during Salvado's time.<sup>18</sup>

**1880s** Salvado travels to Europe in 1882 to seek more recruits, raise funds and purchase goods and essential items. The four bells installed in the Abbey were acquired by Salvado's brother for the use of the Monastery around this time. Two of the bells are a unique pair, cast in 1843 for the Milica Nacional, shortly before it was suppressed and all facilities commandeered by the army and other authorities, precipitating the Spanish Civil War. After the National Militia was abolished, the Army and Church systematically destroyed all their bells. As a result, the two

---

<sup>18</sup> Bucolic, *The West Australian*, 9 February 1886, p. 3.

- bells in the Abbey are now the only known survivors from this period of Spanish history.<sup>19</sup>
- Ornate pair of white-painted timber picket gates with carved posts added to Monastery, replacing earlier rudimentary entry gates.
- 1886** Steam powered machinery imported for new flour milling operations; first of its kind in Western Australia, placing mission's operations ahead of any other milling operation in the State. By 1914 New Norcia had the only macaroni manufactory in the State<sup>20</sup>.
  - 1887** Mission holds 46 leases over 405,000 hectares extending from Gingin in the south to Dongara in the north, monopolising best pastoral land and watering places.
  - 1891** Forrest Government reduces government subsidies; mission assumes financial responsibility for adult population; many adult Aboriginal leave New Norcia to find paid employment.
  - 1899** Salvado, in his 80s, heads to Rome to choose successor, Dom Fulgentius Torres from Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, Barcelona.<sup>21</sup>

**Phase III - Redevelopment and redirection under Torres, 1900-1914**

Fulgentius Torres succeeded Salvado as second Abbot of New Norcia at the turn of the century and implemented sweeping changes to the administration, focus and landscape of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*.

Torres introduced new rules, routines and physical barriers that would control and regulate the daily interactions of the whole New Norcia community so that it would conform more closely with traditional European standards and ultimately that would see the missionary work downgraded and the monastic life prioritised. He oversaw a shift towards the elite education of white children. Torres also disposed of 90% of land heralding the change in focus from agricultural pursuits to a more urbanised community.

Torres' vision for the Monastery was to make it a far more cloistered and private area. Aboriginal people could no longer freely walk through the Monastery and interact with the monks and receive their provisions. The effect of these changes was a decline in the role and number of Aboriginal people within the community.

Torres was also instrumental in a range of architectural improvements and expansions to the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. The buildings of Torres' era are characterised by extensive use of locally made bricks, face brickwork, with stucco mouldings, corrugated galvanised iron roofs, and the embrace of available technology in steel, glass iron (wrought, cast & pressed metal) and plumbing. Skilled artists and craftsmen, including Fr. Lesmes Lopez, John Casellas and others, are also associated with this phase.

---

<sup>19</sup> Report by Dr Francesc Llop i Bayo, bells consultant to the Spanish Government.  
<sup>20</sup> *The West Australian*, 23 June 1914, p.5, via Trove.  
<sup>21</sup> Father Fulgentius Dominguez, former lay brother and butcher who had been at New Norcia for 45 years, was originally selected by Salvado to be his successor. However, Dominguez died in April 1900.

Architecturally the buildings designed under Torres still embraced the classical style in form and symmetry established by Salvado but moved away from the restrained classical forms to more flourish and decoration and reflected Torres' Spanish influences. New architectural styles were expressed in the St Gertrude's (Spanish Gothic) and St Ildephonsus' (Byzantine/Romanesque) colleges. Interior decoration became more elaborate, including paintings, pressed metal ceilings, painted wall decorations and ornate carvings, particularly in the Abbey Church and St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus' college chapels.

**c.1900-03** Bishop Salvado dies in Rome on 29 December 1900, aged 86. Salvado's remains returned to Western Australia and permanently interred in marble tomb in Abbey Church, with funeral mass held on 12 June 1903.

Fulgentius Torres (1861-1914) succeeds Salvado as second Abbot of New Norcia (later Bishop), 26 December 1902.

Monastery central cloister buildings completed by 1903, including third floor dormitory addition to north wing (c.1900); carpenter's workshop building south of monastery (c.1900); two 2-storey houses (c.1901); new north wing built to accommodate baths, butcher and baker (c.1903). Salvado's original c.1847 mission house demolished c.1901 to make way for new two-storey central wing (1903); post and rail fencing replaced with high masonry walls and formal gateways enclosing monastery compound (c.1903).

'White Australia Policy' comes into effect with introduction of the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act (1901)*, designed to limit non-British migration to Australia. Aboriginal people and visitors to New Norcia no longer free to move through monastery and interact with monks. Visitors begin to be accommodated in Novitiate. Infirmary cell converted to dispensary for distribution of food to Aboriginal people.

**1906** Frustrations and tensions surrounding reduced opportunities for employment at the mission come to a head, with more than 30 Aboriginal people descending on settlement on 31 December. Three Aboriginal men charged and later imprisoned.

**1906-08** Construction of new elite girls' college commences, signalling move away from institutional care of Aboriginal children. **St Gertrude's Girls College** opens 1908 as residential convent college for girls under care of Australian Sisters of St Joseph. Merges with St Ildephonsus to become co-educational Salvado College in 1974, later New Norcia Catholic College in 1986, before closing in 1991.

**1908** Abbey Church substantially altered to current Victorian Romanesque appearance, with completion of porch, campanile and eastern edifice. Carved timber gates relocated from monastery to church. Earlier post and rail fence replaced with white-painted timber pickets; entry path formalised with pitched stone kerbing and avenue of trees. Interior updated with Byzantine paint scheme, new carved and gilded altar, Moorish style screen and metal candelabras.

**1909-14** Foundation stone for new residential boys' college laid January 1909. **St Ildephonsus' Boys College** opens on 22 February 1913 as



- residential school for boys under care of Marist Brothers. Painted interiors by Salvador and Lesmes completed slightly later, in 1914.
- 1910** Laundry buildings added to rear of St Joseph's, south-west of St Gertrude's Girls College.
- 1912** Visitor accommodation built by R.P Lanigan, to provide for visiting families to the colleges and monastery. Adapted by Lanigan family for use as a store and post office, later known as **Trading Post**.
- 1913-15** **Handball Courts and Arcades** constructed behind St Ildephonsus'. Reported by the College Director, Brother Stanislaus, to be '...superior to anything in the State'.<sup>22</sup>
- 1914** **St Mary's School and Orphanage** new single-storey school and dormitories for Aboriginal boys constructed. Designed by Torres.
- Substantial walls with piers replace earlier post and rail fence enclosures to building quadrangles - e.g. walls to St Gertrude's and Cemetery Avenue.
- Formal avenues of eucalypts planted in the Torres era.
- Torres dies on 5 October 1914.

#### **Phase IV - Consolidation under Catalan and Urbano, 1916-1950s**

The focus on monastic and liturgical matters, rather than missionary aspects, as imposed by Torres at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* continued under Abbot Anselm Catalan and Father Urbano Gimenez.

Catalan's period from 1915-1951 included both World Wars and the Depression that affected life at the Monastery considerably. His focus was on stability, consolidation and modernisation, making New Norcia an almost entirely self-sufficient community, with improvements made to shoemaking and tailoring facilities introduced during the Salvado era, and, new trades of bookbinding and printing introduced. Catalan also supported music and art, encouraging the work of Dom Stephen Moreno, New Norcia's talented composer of religious music and developing the monastery's art collection.

Urbano was charged by Catalan with continuing the monastic and educational building program at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. The final stages of Monastery were completed during this time, reinforcing architectural strength of central building (fourth floor addition, statue of St Benedict in central cloister, Juniorate addition over Carpenter's Workshop 1938). The architectural expression that evolved out of this period varied with building type and size '...from the classical monument of the Hotel, to the finely scaled pavilion of the Apiary'.<sup>23</sup> In relation to architectural form, the buildings constructed during this period generally had lower pitched roofs that were concealed behind low parapets.

Other changes to the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* during this period saw a decline in agricultural activities. The diversion of the original main road

<sup>22</sup> *The Midlands Advertiser*, 9 January 1914 p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia – St Ildephonsus' College', Conservation Plan, First Draft, Appendix B, Volume 3, April 1998, p. 6.

away from the Monastery and Church Square in 1954 to its current alignment had the effect of increasing St Joseph's and St Mary's prominence along the road.

- 1915** Anselm Catalan succeeds Torres as third Abbot of New Norcia.
- 1917** Open-sided octagonal bee house, or **Apiary**, erected by John Casellas and Rogelio Suárez. Later enclosed and adapted for honey production, 1938-39.
- 1922** Abbey Church extended westwards to accommodate new imported custom-built Moser organ, installed 1923.
- 1924** Alterations and additions to **St Mary's**: two new brick buildings constructed, providing accommodation for 60 boys in two large dormitories, spacious schoolroom, kitchen pantry etc, together with rooms for staff; earlier 1860s slab and clay school and brick cottage demolished.
- 1925-26** Community guest house (later **New Norcia Hotel**) built, originally opening as hostel for travellers and families of college residents 1927. Begins operating as New Norcia Hotel from 1955.
- 1926** **Olive Workshop and Carpenter's Workshop** built.
- 1930s** Great Northern Highway diverted away from monastery in 1954; main road re-name New Norcia Road. Fourth floor added to monastery central building.  
New **College Administration Building** constructed near St Ildephonsus'.
- 1933** **Statue of St Benedict** relocated to Monastery central cloister, from St Mary's Cathedral, Perth.
- 1938** Alterations and additions to monastery: second storey Juniorate addition constructed over carpenter's workshop.
- 1946** Catalan hosts national celebration of centenary of missionary work in Western Australia at New Norcia.

#### **Phase V - Final years of the mission, 1950s - 1970s.**

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the late 1960s had considerable influence on the management of the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. The reforms simplified and clarified both monastic life and worship, including the introduction of English language into the mass, which was in part both a reflection of the broader modernisation of mass in the Western world, but also of the increase in Australian monks being admitted by Abbot Gomez.<sup>24</sup> The most significant changes included the reduction in the number of parishes staffed by the monastery to just the parish of New Norcia.

For the Aboriginal community, the 1950s signalled the start of significant withdrawal from *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. St Mary's and St Joseph's had become increasingly institutionalised '...under the influence of government policy

---

<sup>24</sup> Hutchison, David, Dom Chris Power OSB and Wendy Pearce (eds.), *A Town Like No Other: The Living Tradition of New Norcia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995, p. 87.

and departmental administration'.<sup>25</sup> Aboriginal families continued to move away from New Norcia – many relocating to larger centres such as Moora, Northam and Walebing leaving most of the mission cottages originally built for the Aboriginal families of New Norcia unoccupied.<sup>26</sup> This move away also impacted on the number of children attending St Mary's and St Joseph's.<sup>27</sup> In the 1960s a change in State Government Policy was brought in that discouraged the institutionalisation of Aboriginal children and encouraging them to stay with their families or at least within their own communities.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse reported that a considerable number of claims of child sexual abuse on Aboriginal children occurred at St Mary's Orphanage for Aboriginal boys and St Joseph's Orphanage for Aboriginal girls from the 1950s until they closed in 1974. A total of 33 alleged perpetrators were identified during this period, including priests and religious brothers.<sup>28</sup>

**c.1950s** Gregory Gomez (1904-1995) succeeds Catalan as fourth Abbot of New Norcia, September 1951, marking period of openness to new ideas and Government support for Aboriginal education<sup>29</sup>.

Aboriginal employees relocated into new State government funded modern bungalows erected on hillside overlooking town. Mission village cottages demolished.

Farm buildings, including old stables, demolished.

Moore River floods late 1950s, leading to loss of beehives, subsequent decline of honey production. Apiary operations cease.

Monks become first religious organisation in Western Australia to be granted hotel licence, renaming the former community guest hostel **New Norcia Hotel** in 1955. The hotel was run by Benedictine community as a licenced venue until January 2020, after which it reverted back to hostel accommodation.

Yued Noongar woman, Veronica Willaway, professed as oblate nun, becoming second Aboriginal women in the congregation, after Sister Cecilia Farrell.

**c.1960s** Gomez begins implementing new directions of Second Vatican Council, authorising austere renovations to Abbey Church to meet modern liturgical reforms. Ambitious plan to build modern abbey, to designs of

---

<sup>25</sup> Rooney, Bernard, "An Evolving Concept of Mission: New Norcia 1846-2006", *The Australasian Catholic Record*; Stathfield Vol. 83, Issue 3, July 2006, p. 317.

<sup>26</sup> Haebich, A., *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, 1988, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Rooney, Bernard, "An Evolving Concept of Mission: New Norcia 1846-2006", *The Australasian Catholic Record*; Stathfield Vol. 83, Issue 3, July 2006, p. 317.

<sup>28</sup> 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse - Final Report: Volume 16, Religious institutions Book 2, pp. 29, 103

<sup>29</sup> In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse reported that the Benedictine community of New Norcia had paid a total of \$869,000 compensation to settle 65 claims of child sexual abuse, many of which occurred during Gomez tenure as abbot. Australian Dictionary of Biography, under entry for Gomez, Gregory (dom) (1904-1995), <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gomez-gregory-dom-29919>, accessed March 2022.

international architects Carlo Vannone and Pier Luigi Nervi, does not proceed due to lack of funds.

Funding obtained to refurbish and extend boarding and classroom facilities for Aboriginal children at St Joseph's and St Mary's.

Alterations and additions St Gertrude's and St Ildephonsus': recreational and educational facilities expanded - playing fields, swimming pool, library, science block, new laundry and ablutions added.

New Classroom Block added to St Gertrude's, 1967.

Second Vatican Council reforms. Marist Brothers withdraw from New Norcia, 1964; St Ildephonsus', renamed St Benedict's, reverts to Benedictine community.

Abbey Church interior redecorated for third time: walls and ceilings replastered and plainly painted, except for new religious themed painting in nave; ornately painted sanctuary ceiling retained; ornate carved altar piece removed, new altar placed in the crossing installed; vinyl tiles laid over timber floorboards.<sup>30</sup>

Farm building additions north of monastery: new shearing shed, dairy, and other ancillary sheds.

New staff accommodation built along Piggery Lane.

**1970s** ***Statue of Rosendo Salvado***, gifted by the Spanish government in 1960, was erected south-west of College Administration Building, c.1970s.

Bernard Rooney becomes Prior Administrator in June 1971, taking Gomez's place as monastery superior.

New Norcia connects to State electricity grid, 1972. Swimming pool opens behind St Gertrude's.

Change to Government policy relating to institutional child-care leads to closure of St Joseph's and St Mary's schools in 1974.

St Gertrude's and St Benedict's (former St Ildephonsus' College) merge to become co-educational Salvado College by 1974.

**1974** Commonwealth funded Library and Science Building opened.

**1978:** New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery opens in two-storey former classroom wing of St Joseph's.

### **Phase VI: Repurposing and tourism 1980s - 2022**

The 1980s onwards marked a new era that combined and balanced both the continuing monastic life and traditions still being observed by the remaining monks with the growing tourism business, visitor services and care and management of the buildings and significant cultural collections.

Formal educational uses ceased completely during this era and the former school and college buildings were repurposed for use by external schools and other groups

---

<sup>30</sup> Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia Abbey Church', Conservation Plan, Appendix B, Volume 3 – Draft 16/1/97, 1997

for camps and retreats. Other buildings, such as the Central Administration Building, were adapted for alternative uses by the Benedictine community. Importantly, fundraising activities by the newly established Friends of New Norcia saw the conservation and interpretation of many redundant buildings, including the Blacksmith's Store, Old Flour Mill and Mission Cottage.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, began to offer Indigenous language research, cultural education at secondary and tertiary level, recreational projects for youth and self-employment opportunities for the unemployed.

In 2022, New Norcia is marketed for spiritual retreats, group accommodation camps and as 'Australia's only monastic town, a historical and spiritual treasure in the West Australian bush'.<sup>31</sup>

- 1981** Alterations and additions to monastery: new monks' accommodation, guesthouse and chapel.
- 1983** Placid Spearritt appointed Prior Administrator.
- 1986** Salvado College becomes New Norcia Catholic College.  
26 paintings from New Norcia's art gallery stolen during daring daylight robbery, Western Australia's biggest ever art theft; 25 paintings later recovered, some in damaged state, and eventually restored.
- 1991** New Norcia Catholic College closes, formally ending educational functions at New Norcia. Friends of New Norcia founded to support New Norcia through fundraising, advocacy and voluntary labour.
- 1996** New Norcia Education Centre opens in former St Mary's buildings.
- 2000** Bindoon Estate releases Benedictine branded wine, later known as New Norcia Abbey Wines, exclusively produced and sold within confines of the precinct.
- 2000-03** European Space Agency (ESA) Deep Space Tracking Station constructed ten kilometres south of town - first in the Southern Hemisphere. Officially opened by Premier Dr Geoff Gallop on 5 March 2003. Room in Education Centre (fmr St Mary's) adapted for ESA interpretative display.
- 2009** John Herbert appointed Prior Administrator following death of Placid Spearritt in October 2008.
- 2012** Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse commences.
- 2017** New section of Great Northern Highway to the east of New Norcia opened on 1 May 2017. Main road through town renamed New Norcia Road.  
  
Royal Commission final report handed down in December, implicating Benedictine community of New Norcia in historical abuse. Benedictine community issues Community Statement acknowledging the Commission's findings and pays a total of \$869,000 compensation to

---

<sup>31</sup> Destination New Norcia, Tourism WA, [https://www.westernaustralia.com/en/Destination/New\\_Norcia/](https://www.westernaustralia.com/en/Destination/New_Norcia/) accessed 30 March 2022.

- settle 65 claims of child sexual abuse, many of which occurred c.1950s-1970s, during Gomez's tenure as abbot.
- 2020** Construction and blessing of 'Rock of Remembrance' near Abbey Church as a memorial to people who have experienced neglect and abuse at New Norcia.
- New Norcia Hotel closes as licensed venue. Reverts back to hostel accommodation.
- 2021** Benedictine community announces sale of New Norcia farm due to liabilities relating to redress for historical child sexual abuse. Harvest Road, owned by Andrew and Nicola Forrest, reach agreement to purchase New Norcia Farm as part of growth of integrated cattle and beef supply chain across Western Australia.

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

### Overview

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct of New Norcia* is associated with the establishment, growth and development of the monastic town of New Norcia in a rural landscape near the Moore River, from its initial foundation, as mission to the local Aboriginal people, by Spanish Benedictine monks in 1847, to its current use in 2022 as a visitor destination and place of spiritual retreat. The place comprises a large number of buildings, outbuildings and other elements, including monuments, roads, paths, gardens, plantings, walls, gates, a cemetery, archaeological sites and many cultural artefacts.

The following has been prepared based on publicly available information, without visiting the precinct, and is intended as a summary of the cultural heritage of the precinct. It does not attempt to describe every element of the precinct.

### Siting, Setting and Landscape

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct of New Norcia* is located just off the Great Northern Highway, on the western edge of the eastern Wheatbelt, approximately 132 kilometres north of Perth. The town is situated near the banks of the Moore River in the Victoria Plains district of Western Australia.

The curtilage of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct of New Norcia* is characterised by the main town settlement, which is set amongst rich agricultural farmland and remnant native bushland, ringed by gently undulating hills and bordered to the east by the river floodplain. Isolated mature trees in the open fields between the town and Apiary to the east on either side of the river, including tamarisk, almond and olive tree plantings, indicate the location of the precinct's former productive gardens and orchards. A productive mature Olive Grove, approximately two kilometres from the town centre, is situated within the curtilage to the northeast, with the grazing paddocks of New Norcia Farm visible across the river and beyond the curtilage to the east.

The precinct is concentrated around the former alignment of Great Northern Highway (now New Norcia Road) which forms the main north-south axis of the precinct. Heavy traffic has been redirected away from the main town centre via a bypass route located approximately one kilometre to the east, which includes a scenic lookout over the town. The town's original main axis, the Old Geraldton

Road, approximately 125 metres east of New Norcia Road, now has a diminished presence within the precinct, the result of changed patterns of use over time. The precinct is crossed in an east-west direction by various other roads and tracks, which include the Old Wyening Road near the southern end of the precinct, which leads across the river to the Apiary; Farm Road and Farm Road Bridge, which connect across the river to the agricultural farm land in the east; and various other walking tracks and river crossings associated with early patterns of use of the place. The old playing fields are located within the curtilage just east and south of Old Geraldton Road and Old Wyening Road, whilst the open area west of Old Geraldton Road opposite the playing fields is now a picnic and set down area for caravans and day trippers.

The settlement area is relatively flat, with formed red asphalt and red gravel roads and tracks visually reinforced by stands of mature native gum, olive and other tree plantings. Boundary walls and fences, in a variety of different styles and construction materials, denote discrete zones or campuses throughout the precinct. Entrance forecourts, courtyards and gardens within these zones are laid out formally to the buildings and the town, instilling a strong sense of calmness and order to the precinct.

Built form is concentrated in the area east of New Norcia Road and along the eastern edge of the Old Geraldton Road, with only a few buildings dispersed through the central area between the two roads.

The layout and fabric of the townsite in its landscape context has been greatly influenced by the Benedictine philosophy and way of life. The early mission buildings were planned and laid out in the form of a Latin cross, with the monastery at the foot of the cross to the east, the church in the middle, the two colleges at the end of each arm of the cross, and the cemetery at the apex to the west. Symbolically, the sun rises over the monastery to the east and sets over the cemetery to the west. Today, the east-west axis of the precinct extends eastwards across the river to terminate at the apiary, and westwards beyond the college precinct to terminate at the rocky hilltop overlooking the precinct.

Construction of the early mission buildings relied almost exclusively on local materials, either hand sourced from the surrounding areas or crafted by the monks in their own workshops. Natural granite fieldstones, mud plaster, limewash, rough-hewn structural timbers, split timber shingles and red bricks pressed in the mission's brickworks demonstrate this resourcefulness and are all still in evidence throughout the precinct. Reflecting the spartan simplicity of the Benedictine monastic order, many buildings have been repurposed for other uses, rather than demolished, as original uses have become redundant, or their materials recycled elsewhere within the precinct.

### **Built Environment**

#### Bishop's Well c.1850s

The largest surviving example of a nineteenth century stone pitched 'Monkish' well<sup>32</sup> hand built by Salvado and one of the oldest in the Victoria Plains<sup>33</sup>. Constructed from local granite fieldstone, the well is approximately 4.5 metres in diameter and of unknown depth. Situated within the Apiary landscape on the eastern side of the Moore River, the well is able to hold a substantial capacity of water and may have originally been used for irrigation purposes. A galvanised steel and mesh protective cover, a recent addition, has been fitted over the well opening. The condition and extent of any remaining physical evidence associated with the well's early water retrieval operations is not known. It is no longer in use.

#### Stone Well, no date

A stone pitched well on the western bank of the Moore River most likely originally built in the nineteenth century to maintain pastoral sheep flocks. Constructed from local granite fieldstone, the well is approximately 1.5 metres in diameter and of unknown depth. A galvanised mesh cover, a recent addition, has been fitted over the well opening. The well is no longer in use and no physical evidence associated with early water retrieval operations appears to remain.

#### Old Flour Mill, c.1850s

The oldest surviving building in the precinct and one of few remaining farm buildings associated with the mission's early self-sustaining agricultural endeavours. Once part of a flourishing group of early farm buildings, which have since been demolished.

A simple Victorian Georgian vernacular building constructed of local granite fieldstone set in mud mortar and finished externally and internally with mud plaster and limewash. The building has a high-pitched hipped roof framed on bush pole rafters and sheeted in corrugated galvanised iron. Internally there are two rooms at ground floor level and a full loft level over. Floors are planked timber supported on sawn joists and rough-hewn timber beams. Joinery is painted timber, with ledged and braced planked doors at ground floor level and multi-paned sashes at first floor level. The mill, which has been re-roofed and underwent conservation works to roof framing, window sashes and doors in the mid-1990s, appears to be in good condition. Roof sheeting may conceal evidence of early split timber shingles. The building is not known to contain any original machinery or equipment.

Since becoming operationally redundant in 1879, the building has been used as an occasional band practice room and feed store. Its current use is unknown.

#### Monastery, 1847, 1857, 1870, 1874, c.1900, 1901, 1903, 1938, c.1960s, 1981

*Other names: New Norcia Monastery, Benedictine Monastery of New Norcia, Holy Trinity Monastery, Mission Monastery*

The east terminating element of the mission's original cruciform plan town layout, which aligns with the church and cemetery to the west on the central axis.

---

32 For a well to be 'monkish' it should meet the criteria of land owned by the Benedictines, be constructed to a standard design including a large diameter and stone lining, be of good quality and sited to provide water and have grass nearby sufficient to feed a flock of 1000 sheep. See: BERTINSHAW, R. (2016). Holy Waters: the development of criteria for the identification of the monkish wells of New Norcia in colonial Western Australia. *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, 34, 68–73 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26350195>

33 Interpretative sign no.8, New Norcia



An imposing Renaissance-style stucco, masonry and iron complex, constructed in stages from 1857, set within a walled and gated compound, overlooking remnant orchards, olive groves and productive gardens to the east. The complex includes the site of Salvado's original mission house (c.1847, demolished c.1901), now occupied by the central building.

Buildings range in height from one to four stories and are carefully ordered around three private cloistered courtyards. The earliest buildings enclose the central cloister which align with the central axis of the mission's original cruciform plan town layout. Key buildings include:

- Central cloister: 3-storey north wing (1857, 1870, c.1900), 3-storey south wing (1870) and 4-storey central building (1903, with fourth floor addition c.1930);
- North cloister: single-storey west wing (Garrido Hall, 1874), 2-storey house (1901), single-storey north wing addition to Garrido Hall (butcher shop, bakery and bath house, 1903) and recent single-storey east accommodation wing (c.1970s); and
- South cloister: 2-storey house (1901), 2-storey east wing (ground floor Carpenter's Workshop, c.1900s and first floor Juniorate addition, 1938), and recent infill additions to the south and southwest, which include current Monastery Guesthouse<sup>34</sup> (c.1960s, 1981) and chapel and campanile (no date).

The Cloisters are brick paved with brick-edged formal grassed garden beds and stands of mature tree plantings. The central cloister features a monumental Classical entrance portico (c.1901), designed by Torres, and a relocated Statue of St Benedict (1903).<sup>35</sup> The imported wrought iron gates to the entry portico replace earlier carved timber gates which were relocated to the church.

Externally, buildings have thick, load-bearing masonry walls, wide, full-height timber verandahs and simple hipped corrugated galvanised iron roofs in lieu of the original timber shingles. Verandahs feature decorative fretwork balustrades. Although constructed at different times, the white painted stucco facades demonstrate consistency in their Classical embellishments, and together with the highly ordered fenestration, painted timber joinery and curved or pointed Classical window pediments, present a unified architectural appearance.

Original internal finishes are likely to include plastered walls, some embellished with fine plaster modelling around doors and windows, decorative ceilings in pressed metal, planked timber and plaster, and timber floorboards. Notable interior spaces include the Library and Music Room, both of which feature highly ornate decorative ceilings, designed by Torres.

---

<sup>34</sup> The current monastery guesthouse comprises an updated 1960s guesthouse on the lower floor of the two-storey north-south building, able to accommodate seven men. In 1981, this was extended by turning an open toilet block into a laundry, filling in a section on the north side of the perimeter wall that previously served as rough storage space with eight ensuite twin rooms, thus increasing the accommodation capacity to 23 men and women. The upper floor of the two-storey building was removed and widened to house a new oratory open to guests; the campanile was built at the same time. (Father David Barry, pers. comm., May 2022).

<sup>35</sup> This statue was originally located at the first Catholic Cathedral in Perth which had been built by the Benedictines. It was removed to *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* in 1933 during construction of the new St Mary's Cathedral.

Abbey Church, c.1861, 1870s, c.1870s, 1922, 1908

*Other names: Holy Trinity Abbey, Holy Trinity Church, Benedictine Monastery Church, Mission Church, New Norcia Pro-Cathedral*

The middle element of the mission's original cruciform plan town layout, which aligns with the monastery to the east and cemetery to the west on the central axis.

An original stone building, constructed in stages from c.1861 to replace an earlier wooden structure (no longer extant),<sup>36</sup> the cruciform section was built first, with later additions including the western choir extension (1870), sacristy infills (c.1870s). The lean-to extension (1922), distinguishable by its face brick walls, was built to accommodate a custom-built Albert Moser organ imported from Europe, which remains in-situ. The stuccoed eastern edifice (1908) completed under Torres' direction, with its campanile and raised entry porch, altered the church's original Georgian style to its current Victorian Romanesque appearance. The campanile incorporates a four-sided clock tower surmounted by a cupola finished with fish-scale shingles.<sup>37</sup>

The four bells were originally supplied to the Monastery in 1879/1880 and were acquired by Salvado's brother in Spain. Two in the north and south towers are thought to originate from the Benedictine Abbey of St Martin de Compostela in Spain. The two in the east and west towers were cast for the Milicia Nacional in 1843. The National Militia was the leading force of the 'Liberales' (the Liberals, later becoming the Republicans) and the Army and Church were the leaders of the 'Conservadores' (the Conservatives, later became the Francoists). The bells of the National Militia were used in opposition to the Church, in an attempt to impose 'Madrid Time' in place of the clerical Hours as the centre of Spanish daily life. As a result, after the National Militia was abolished, the Army and Church systematically destroyed all their bells. The two bells located in the Abbey Church are now the only known survivors from this period of Spanish history.<sup>38</sup>

*Abbey Church* presents as an elongated cruciform-shaped stone building, with a hipped gable roof. Stonework retains its original face finished appearance. Red corrugated metal roof sheeting replaces the original split timber shingles.

External walls and footings are constructed of local rough-hewn granite fieldstone, randomly set in mud mortar. Walls have classically derived pilasters and mouldings, either half formed in stucco (earliest cruciform section) or simply painted on (later additions). Segmental and pointed pediments are employed as decorative treatments over window openings. Original multi-pane Georgian windows have been replaced with traditional timber sash and awning windows.

Internally, floors are polished timber and walls are painted plaster, embellished through the original cruciform section of the church with simple hand-painted murals depicting the Stations of the Cross. Ceilings through the nave and vaulted crossing are pressed metal, whilst the later choir extension displays a decorative coffered plaster ceiling with several ceiling roses picked out in multiple paint colours.

---

<sup>36</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

<sup>37</sup> Hugo-Brunt, M, 'Survey and Photographic Record of the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia, Western Australia', 1979, p.74

<sup>38</sup> Report by Dr Francesc Llop i Bayo, bells consultant to the Spanish Government

Significant artworks and relics include Salvado's white Carrera marble tomb (c.1903), the Albert Moser organ (1922) with its German-crafted fine oak casework, and the painting of Our Lady of Good Counsel. The latter was presented to Salvado by Father (later Saint) Vincent Pallotti in 1845 before Salvado left for Australia and is associated with one of New Norcia's most famous stories.<sup>39</sup> Other notable items include clear finished wooden bench pews and two-toned wooden choir stalls. Modern interventions include wall-mounted track lighting, handrails, ceiling fans and roller blind window treatments.

Just north of the church is the 'Rock of Remembrance' memorial (2020), which serves as a permanent monument to those who have experienced neglect or abuse at New Norcia. Laid out in the form of a cross, it features a large natural rock salvaged from the New Norcia bypass roadworks, set within a weathered steel encased raised pebble bed.

#### Cemetery, from c.1860

The west terminating element of the mission's original cruciform plan town layout, which aligns with the church and monastery to the east on the central axis.

A traditional parish cemetery containing approximately 130 marked and an unknown number of unmarked graves. Known burials include monks, sisters, Aboriginal people who lived and worked at the mission, some early Victoria Plains district pioneers, and other people associated with the place.

Marked graves are formally laid out within a 65-metre square lot bound by a low-height cement rendered masonry wall. A ceremonial entrance, marked by a set of wrought iron entry gates set between two tall cement-rendered brick piers, is located on the eastern side. A ceremonial gravel driveway leads uphill from New Norcia Road to the entry gates. The elevated statue visible on the east-west approach path to the cemetery is the Rosendo Salvado Monument, gifted to the Benedictine community in 1960 by the Spanish Government, but not erected until the c.1970s.

A range of different gravesite markers is evident, including simple white crosses on masonry plinths, traditional masonry headstones, and full kerbed or fenced monuments. The large, white marble tomb near the centre of the cemetery marks the gravesite of Torres. Other notable gravesites include Helen Cuper, the mission's first Aboriginal post mistress, and master wood craftsman Senor John Casellas, who crafted the *Apiary*.

#### Mission Cottage (fmr), c.1860, c.1960s, c.2008

A restored single-storey Victorian Georgian cottage that originally functioned as a guesthouse, then town gaol, before being adapted for use as a public toilet in the 1960s. It was restored for interpretative purposes in the mid-to-late-2000s.

Originally constructed in mud-plastered local granite fieldstone, the building now presents with a modern limewashed render appearance, with a reconstructed hipped shingle roof and painted timber joinery. Internally there are limewashed rendered walls, concrete floors (installed when the place was in use as a toilet block) and no ceilings. Inset into the floor of one of the rooms is an interpretative

---

<sup>39</sup> The story tells how in 1847 Salvado turned back a bushfire which was threatening the mission's crops by placing the painting in its path, causing the wind and fire to suddenly change direction.

display of earlier stone flooring uncovered during conservation works. The building is in good condition and can be inspected by visitors as part of a self-guided town tour.

#### Old Police Station, c.1860

*Other names: Kelly's Cottage*

Original single-storey stone and iron cottage built as a residence, police station and lock-up. Constructed in the Colonial Georgian style, the building has local granite fieldstone walls, three large masonry chimneys and a steeply pitched broken back hipped roof, clad in short sheet corrugated iron. The corrugated iron clad lean-to addition on the south side and timber pergola on the east side appear to be later additions. Original face stonework to the west and north elevations has been rendered and painted over, however stonework on the east side retains its original face finished appearance. Most recently in use as a private residence, the place which appears to be in good condition, is not currently in use.

#### Blacksmith's Shop, c.1869

Restored single-storey brick and iron workshop originally built to replace an earlier smithy that burnt down in 1869. Purposely sited away from the monastery complex, near the northern end of the precinct, so that district settlers could more easily access horseshoeing and other machinery repair services provided by the mission than previously when they were accessed via a door direct to the Monastery itself.

Original wall construction was locally made red brick laid in mud mortar and finished with protective render. The building also originally had a brick chimney, still extant, and a shingle roof. Following conservation works in 2010, the place now has a modern rendered appearance, replacement corrugated iron roof and painted timber joinery. Although no longer in use, it remains in good condition.

#### New Police Station (fmr Novitiate), 1876, c.1960

Two-storey rendered masonry and iron building, with a distinctive painted sundial on its north wall, originally constructed as a residence for novice monks. It was later used as a guest house and workers' quarters before being adapted for use a police station in the 1950s. Currently unused, although it served as staff accommodation until 2021.<sup>40</sup>

The building has a simple hipped corrugated iron roof with a two-storey timber verandah under the main roof on the east side, and a single-storey lean-to extension on the west side. The verandah has been enclosed at first floor level. The separate framed and weatherboard clad single-storey structure to the east is the former cell block, constructed c.1960.

#### New Flour Mill, 1879

The early mission's second and largest flour mill, built to cater for the mission's rapidly expanding flour production activities in the late nineteenth century.

Three-storey masonry and iron building constructed in the Victorian Georgian style. Oriented with its long facades facing north and south, the building is raised on a low granite fieldstone plinth, with load-bearing Flemish bonded brick walls, rendered externally, and a simple hipped roof clad in corrugated iron. Facades are

---

<sup>40</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

vertically divided into bays defined by Doric pilasters and have large rectangular openings set into expressed stucco surrounds. Externally, the attic level is discernible by its smaller, horizontal window openings, projecting timber cornice and continuous stucco string coursing.

Internally the place may retain evidence of early fabric and equipment including butt-jointed timber floorboards, tree trunk floor and roof beams bearing directly onto walls, and Ransome & Sims milling gear. A nearby stone pitched well, northeast of the mill, is thought to be associated with the original water supply for the mill's threshing and grinding operations.

At one time the oldest functioning flour mill in Western Australia, the place was partially restored in the late 1980s before being briefly re-purposed for New Norcia's commercial bakehouse operations in the 1990s. The mill is no longer operational and its current use and condition are unknown.

#### St Joseph's Girls School Group (fmr), 1880, c.1910, c.1930s, 1955, c.1960s

A courtyard complex of interconnected brick and iron former school and convent buildings, constructed across several different eras, which are associated with the establishment of St Joseph's convent school and orphanage for Girls from 1861 and its subsequent development as an educational facility under various iterations until 1972.

Comprises the Old Convent (fmr) (1880), Orphanage (fmr) (1910), Kitchen/Laundry (fmr) (1930), New Convent (fmr) (1930) Classroom and Dormitory Block (fmr) (1955), Hall (c.1960s) and Stables/Work Centre (.no date) and several other unidentified buildings. The main buildings are laid out along New Norcia Road within a semi-enclosed brick walled compound. To the rear, buildings open out onto a series of informal grassed courts and there is a large red bitumen paved visitor parking area to the south.

The two-storey New Convent is the formal centrepiece of the group and an important element of the New Norcia streetscape. An imposing Inter-War Free Classical style building, it has a steeply pitch corrugated iron roof and a striking façade, with a grand central entry portico, that is highly embellished with decorative stucco mouldings. Original stucco and face red brickwork to the principal (east) facade has been subsequently painted over, however other façades retain their original unpainted appearance. The single-storey section to the north, although constructed earlier, was substantially modified when the New Convent was built. This has unfortunately resulted in loss of original period detail, including the former crenelated parapets which were an unusual feature of the original Orphanage. The two-storey Classroom Block to the south is an unremarkable Post-War red brick addition which has plain concrete window surrounds, painted timber sash windows and a gable roof. The Stables/Work Centre, located at the rear of the group, is a single storey rendered masonry building with narrow tripartite window openings fitted with glass louvres, and a replacement asbestos roof. The building appears to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but has been disused for some time and is now in poor condition.

Although formal education and residential care uses have long since ceased, the buildings continue to play an important role in the ongoing use of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, having been adapted for use as the New Norcia Visitor Centre gift shop, art gallery and museum, which houses one of the largest

collections of moveable religious art in Australia as well as a significant collection of early textiles and vestments known as 'The Spanish Collection'.

The Old Convent provides dormitory style accommodation and the Hall remains in use as group activity and meeting space.

St Gertrude's Girls College, 1906-08, c.1920s, c.1921, c.1970s

*Other names: St Gertrude's College, Salvado College (from 1974), New Norcia Catholic College*

Original Federation Gothic style residential convent college for girls, designed by Torres in association with acclaimed Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier. The terminating element on the southern arm of the mission's original cruciform plan town layout.

The college is laid out amongst a formal garden within a walled and gated domain and includes the main three-storey brick and iron St Gertrude's College building (1906-08), an attached brick and iron chapel (St Gertrude's Chapel) (1906-08), a brick and iron Caretaker's Cottage (c.1906-08) and cistern, Entrance Gates (c.1920s), and an avenue of Canary Island Date Palms (*Phoenix canariensis*).

The main building comprises a central twin tower entry element and two large side wings connected by arcaded links, with two-storey bullnose verandahs to the rear. A large rear yard is divided into two on the central axis by the chapel. The arcade links, originally single-storey, were significantly altered in c.1921 with the addition of the first-floor level, and infill glazing was added to the ground floor arcades in the c.1970s.

External walls are raised on a rusticated dado and feature tuckpointed New Norcia red brickwork with stucco quoins and mouldings. The steeply pitched gable roof is clad in corrugated iron punctuated by regularly spaced brick dormers. The tower spires feature stamped metal roof sheeting, like the church campanile. Each spire is surmounted by a flagstaff. Verandahs are supported on cast-iron columns and have decorative metal balustrades, valences and brackets. Porch and verandah floors feature encaustic tiles.

Internally, there are raised timber hardwood floors, with tiled finishes evident to common bathroom areas, and pressed metal ceilings. The most notable space is the richly decorated St Gertrude's Chapel, which has undergone several notable interior refurbishment campaigns. The stunning interior showcases the master craftsmanship of Lesmes Lopez, who executed the ceiling and wall paintings, Juan Casellas, who carved the magnificent altar piece and Salvador Alberich who applied the gold leaf work.

St Gertrude's merged with the former St Ildephonsus' College to form the co-educational Salvado College in 1974, later becoming New Norcia Catholic College. The Sisters of St Joseph's remained in charge of the girls boarding section until the end of 1977<sup>41</sup>. Formal educational uses ceased in 1991 with the closure of the college. Today it is mainly used for group accommodation for recreational camp retreats, with regular visitor tours operating to the Chapel. The single roomed Caretaker's Cottage, with its attached stone-pitched cistern, was formerly used as a residence and canteen before undergoing conservation works to the roof,

---

<sup>41</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

rainwater disposal and drainage system and to damaged brickwork in the early 2000s.

Trading Post, c.1912, c.2010s

*Other names: Lanigan's Store*

Single storey rendered brick and iron bungalow located along New Norcia Road towards the southern end of the precinct. Originally built for visitor accommodation, and later adapted by the Lonigan family for use as post office and store, or trading post. The place has been much altered since its original construction, most recently during works to construct the New Norcia bypass road in the mid-2010s, when the building was used as a site office. Painting, new carpets, asbestos removal and access compliance upgrade works were undertaken at this time. The building appears disused and is in fair to poor condition.

St Ildephonsus' Boys College Group, 1909-14

*Other names: St Ildephonsus' College, St Benedict's College (after 1964), Salvado College (from 1974), St Benedict's Boys Residence (from 1974), New Norcia Catholic College*

Original Federation Free Classical style residential college building with an integral chapel, St Ildephonsus' Chapel, designed by Torres in association with acclaimed Catalonian architect Enrique Sagnier. Built shortly after completion of St Gertrude's College, St Ildephonsus' completes the mission's original cruciform plan town layout as the terminating element on the northern arm of the cross.

The three-storey brick and iron building is laid out amongst formal gardens within a walled and gated domain. The landscaped forecourt features a marble statue of the Blessed Marcellin Champagnat<sup>42</sup>, which is raised on a rendered plinth outside the main entrance.

The building has a quadrangular plan layout with the Chapel centrally positioned about the quadrangle to form two internal courtyards. The foundation stone was laid in 1909. Walls are English-bonded fair face New Norcia red brickwork, with stucco dressings, which include quoined window surrounds with prominent arched drip moulds. Windows have painted timber sashes with arched toplights. Brickwork has been subsequently painted over in a red oxide colour. The corrugated iron skillion roofs over each wing are concealed behind a distinctive crenelated parapet. Internal courtyards are overlooked by two-storey bullnosed timber verandahs with decorative timber balustrades.

Interior detailing and craftsmanship are not as fine as St Gertrude's. Original fabric is likely to include tongued and grooved floorboards, plastered walls, timber joinery and pressed metal ceilings. As for St Gertrude's, the interior of St Ildephonsus' Chapel showcases the master craftsmanship of Lesmes Lopez, who executed the wall paintings, Juan Casellas, who carved the altar piece and Salvador Alberich who applied the gold leaf work.

The separate Caretaker's Cottage (c.1950s) to the north is a single-storey red brick building with a corrugated iron gable roof and painted timber windows.

---

<sup>42</sup> According to interpretative signage at the place, Marcellin Champagnat founded the Marist Brothers on 2 January 1817 in the Archdiocese of Lyon, Southern France. The Marist Brothers ran St Ildephonsus' College from 1913 until their departure at the end of 1964, after which the College came under control of the Benedictines.

Known as St Benedict's College following the departure of the Marist Brothers in 1964, the former St Ildephonsus' merged with the former St Gertrude's in 1974 to become the co-educational Salvado College, later New Norcia Catholic College, with the boys' boarding section renamed St Benedict's Boys Residence at this time<sup>43</sup> Formal educational uses ceased in 1991 with the closure of the campus. Today the place is mainly used as group accommodation for recreational retreats, with guided visitor tours of the Chapel operating regularly. It is in good condition.

#### Handball Courts and Arcades, 1913-15, c.1990s

A unique and handsome Federation Romanesque style red brick building originally built as a handball court facility for use by the St Ildephonsus' College students.

A brick and iron structure, comprising an east-facing arcaded shelter attached to four west-facing open-air handball courts. The arcaded section has a raised concrete floor, rounded arch openings, exposed timber trusses and a mono-pitch corrugated iron roof. The handball courts to the rear have no roof. Courts are separated by stepped brick walls which terminate in Gothic-style capped brick piers. End walls continue through to the arcaded section above wall plate height to form curved and stepped parapets on side elevations. Court wall inner faces are rendered and retain line markings, possibly original.

The building has a history of rising damp and salt attack. Conservation works in mid-1990s saw the arcade roof replaced and areas of fretted brickwork repaired. The separately roofed infill over the northernmost handball court is a later intervention. The current use and condition of the building is unknown.

#### St Mary's Boys School Group, (fmr), 1914, 1988, c.1996

*Other names: New Norcia Education Centre*

Small group of interconnected brick and iron buildings, originally designed by Torres as school and dormitory accommodation for Aboriginal boys. Constructed over a period of only a few months in 1914, to replace earlier buildings associated with St Mary's school and orphanage, established during the Salvado era.

Originally set out around a central courtyard known as Weld Square within a separate enclosure in the northeast corner of St Ildephonsus' College compound. Buildings fronting the main road display elements of the Federation Free Classical style. The northernmost building, with its stepped brick parapet gable and rusticated facade articulations, is the least austere of the group.

Walls are raised on brick plinths and constructed of New Norcia red face brickwork. Fenestration is regularly ordered about the facades and windows retain multi-pane timber sashes. Facades are minimally embellished with stucco mouldings to sills and around arched window heads. Original face brickwork has since been painted over in a red oxide colour, with contrasting white paint applied to the plinth.

Alterations and additions include additional rooms, ablution blocks and staff accommodation along the northern boundary. Workshops and ablutions have been built in place of the southern wall. Weld Square, originally laid out with formal tree plantings around a feature statue, was altered in 1988. Buildings show evidence of general wear and tear but overall appear to be in fair to good condition.

---

<sup>43</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022



St Mary's School closed in 1974 and the Benedictine community now run the New Norcia Education Centre (established 1996) from the buildings.

#### The Apiary, 1917, 1938-39, 1992, c.2001

An unusual landmark structure located in remnant orchards on the eastern side of the Moore River and the easternmost building in the precinct.

Octagonal-shaped timber framed rotunda, with red brick infill walls and a steeply pitched corrugated galvanised iron roof. Originally built as an open-sided bee house fitted with repurposed timber shelving to support the mission's hives. In 1938-39 it was partly enclosed and adapted for use as a honey production house, with the brick infill walls, timber joinery and a concrete channel drain added at this time. As honey production declined in c.1960s, the building fell into disrepair. Roof repairs were carried out in 1992, and additional works undertaken from c.2001 to conserve the 1930s appearance.

The building features distinctive V-shaped clerestory bracing, visible externally, and a reconstructed decorative roof finial. Interior walls are cement plastered and there is a concrete floor and raised timber loft. A small boiler associated with the c.1930s era of honey production remains inside the building. The building is no longer in operational use and its current condition is unknown.

#### New Norcia Hotel and Quarters (fmr) (1925-26)

*Other names: Community Guesthouse, New Norcia Mission Hostel*

Imposing two-storey stuccoed masonry and tile building, originally constructed as a community hostel, with a separate single-storey brick caretaker's quarters, located near the southern end of the precinct. Although removed to the west from New Norcia Road, the building maintains a significant presence within the precinct.

A fine example of the Inter-War Free Classical style, the building has an imposing and highly ordered east façade, with a monumental arched colonnade and balcony divided by a central tripartite pedimented entrance. Elaborate, classically embellished cornices are supported on Ionic columns at first floor balcony level and by round arch openings with engaged piers at ground floor colonnade level. Façade masonry is painted in contrasting colours of white and cream, although archival images suggest stuccowork may have originally been unpainted. Internally, the building features a grand central staircase, tessellated tile floors and classically derived mouldings and embellishments.

The former Quarters to the rear, comprises two original brick and iron buildings, linked by an open-sided shed which appears to be a later addition. The buildings have red face brick walls, corbelled brick parapets and painted timber sash windows. The southern building has a large arched moulded timber entry door with a stained glass toplight and has most recently been used as a/the manager's accommodation. The northern building has been adapted for use as public toilets, although this use may now be redundant.

The former Hotel ceased operating as a licensed venue in January 2020 and has since reverted back to hostel use, mainly for large group accommodation.

#### Roadhouse, 1955

*Other names: Salvado Roadhouse Cafe, Petrol Station, New Norcia Roadhouse, Service Station, Gull New Norcia Roadhouse*

The southernmost building in the precinct, located on New Norcia Road. Single storey painted brick and iron service station, with semi-detached roadhouse café, public restrooms and a covered parking area. The main building has a parapet fascia, concealed low-pitch metal roof and flat roofed awning which extends over a bitumen-paved fuel service area. The café addition has a flat roof, glazed shopfronts, and modern canvas window awnings.

Originally constructed with a vehicle servicing bay in the south-east corner<sup>44</sup>, the roadhouse appears to have been much altered and added to over time. It currently functions as a fuel service station, shop, post office and café. The café, owned and operated by the Benedictine community, has a religiously themed interior which features timber wainscot panelling, choir stall seating, and wall-mounted interpretative material. The provenance of this fabric is not known.

#### Olive Workshop and Carpentry Workshop, 1925-26, c.1990s

*Other names: Olive Press Building, Olive House*

Finely crafted original brick and iron workshop constructed in the Federation Romanesque style, with attached corrugated iron machinery shed and associated water tanks, erected for olive processing in 1926-27. Workshop walls are constructed of New Norcia red face brickwork, raised on local granite fieldstone. Brickwork features finely crafted corbelling, coffered articulations and engaged piers. Double hung sliding sash windows are set into segmental arch openings.

The place was the subject of urgent conservation works to the roof structure in the mid-1990s. It remains in infrequent use as an olive oil bottling facility and is in fair condition.

#### College Administration Building, c.1930s

Original two-storey brick and iron building directly addressing New Norcia Road, to the southeast of St Ildephonsus' College. The building is laid out to a rectangular plan and demonstrates simple Georgian-style form and proportions. It has red face brick walls, raised on a random rubble granite fieldstone plinth, with fenestration regularly ordered about the facades. Openings on both levels have painted rendered surrounds, with rendered keystone arches over ground floor windows. Windows retain painted timber sliding sashes and doors are painted timber panel. The low-pitched main roof is concealed behind an unusual painted rendered parapet. A separately roofed two-storey painted timber and iron verandah, with painted concrete and iron access stair, is centred about the rear (west) façade.

The building is one of few remaining early face brick buildings in the precinct that has not had its principal facade rendered or painted. It remains in use by the Benedictine community as an Institute for Benedictine Studies and is in good condition.

#### Pig-Keeper's Cottage (1936-37) and Piggery ruins (c.1902)

*Other names: The Hermitage*

Restored brick and iron Inter-War bungalow located in an open field near the river bank south of the Monastery. The building has a bay window frontage, painted timber windows, timber verandah and modern galvanised steel roof. The cottage

---

<sup>44</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022

remains in use for visitor accommodation as a secluded residential retreat known as 'The Hermitage'. The ruins of the brick and iron former Piggery (c.1902) are situated beyond the cottage to the south. The condition and extent of remaining original fabric unknown.

#### Rosendo Salvado Monument (erected c.1970s)

Gifted to the Benedictine Community by the Spanish government in 1960, but not erected until the c.1970s. Bronze statue, elevated on a painted steel pedestal, depicting Bishop Salvado, dressed robes, with his right hand raised over his head and holding a cross. Surrounded by a circular shaped low-height faced brick enclosure, which has a low-height white-painted wrought iron palisade railing. A marble plaque within the enclosure bears the inscription: 'Bishop Salvado, Founder of New Norcia, 1814-1900'. Additional interpretation signage, in modern stainless and weathered steel, is provided beyond the enclosure to the east.

#### Mission Cottages Interpretation Centre (c.1960-70s) & former Mission Cottage Village site

*Other names: Marian Shrine, Mission Cottage Village*

Formerly known as the Marian Shrine, this octagonal brick and iron building has since been repurposed as an interpretation centre. The building has painted brick walls, a modern brick paved floor, a modern corrugated steel roof and painted timber open gable verandah. The centre is furnished with a modern dressed timber seat and interpretative display material. Adjacent to the building is a stone footprint of one of the first four mission cottages, understood to be the original stone foundations, which forms part of the interpretative display. According to site signage, there are five other revealed former mission cottage foundations in the vicinity.

#### St Scholastica Administration Block, 1967

Two-storey former classroom block remotely located in the northwest corner of the St Gertrude's College compound. A Post-War International style building, it has an exposed concrete frame, red brick infill walls and a brown brick plinth. The long facades to the north and south feature large window modular assemblies and breeze block screens to the end bays. The building is in fair condition. The ground floor currently houses the business administration centre and IT centre, and the upper floor houses the library's journal collection and books in stack.<sup>45</sup>

#### Library and Science Building, fmr (1974)

Commonwealth funded former library and science building which opened in 1974. Single-storey brick and iron series of former classrooms, located near the southern entrance into the College Administration Building compound. The building has a domestic residential appearance with blended red brick walls, splayed brick sills, projecting timber window bays and high-level ribbon windows. When New Norcia Catholic College closed in 1991, the building was brought into service as part of the monastery's expanding library, with the former science rooms at the east end largely cleared of signs of their original classroom use. The building, which is in fair

---

<sup>45</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

condition, continues to function as one of the Community's libraries and houses the librarian's office<sup>46</sup>.

#### Machinery Shed (n.d)

A large, steel-clad agricultural shed located at the northern end of the Monastery, visible from the Old Geraldton Road and Farm Road. The original function and exact date of construction of the shed is not known. The structure remains in use and is understood to house an important machinery collection and service the privately run New Norcia bakery operations. The shed appears to be in good condition.

#### **Other buildings and features**

The following other buildings and features have been identified as of potential cultural heritage significance to the precinct:

- Stables/Work Centre to rear of St Joseph's Girls School Group.
- Old footbridge over Moore River.
- Stone weir and cairn.
- Farm Road Bridge.

Little is currently known about these elements and further research would be required to ascertain cultural heritage significance.

#### **Archaeology**

It is highly likely that archaeological deposits and surface artefacts and features are present across the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, including former buildings and structures. These may include but are not limited to the following potential archaeological sites:

- site of former Mission Cottage Village, south of Church square.
- site of early farm building - stables, wool press, shearing shed.
- site of former 1950s staff housing, Piggery Lane.
- site of Salvado's original 1847 Mission House, under Monastery central building.
- playing fields and grounds associated with early schools and colleges.

Little is currently known about these sites and further research would be required to ascertain cultural heritage significance.

It is also likely that archaeological material is also present in and around the extant heritage buildings, including the vicinity of doorways and beneath floorboards. The 2017 discovery of a former student's papers and other detritus beneath the floorboards in his room in St Ildephonsus' College suggests this may be a considerable resource.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Based on information provided by Father David Barry, May 2022.

<sup>47</sup> New Norcia Benedictine community, 2017, News, Source: <https://www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au/media/news/2017/7/an-interesting-find-a-boarders-stash-c1949>, Accessed March 2022

### 13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

#### Principal Australian Historic Theme(s)

- 2.2 Adapting to diverse environments
- 2.4.5 Migrating: Changing the face of rural and urban Australia through migration
- 3.4.5 Utilising natural resources
- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 3.6 Recruiting labour
- 3.11 Altering the environment
- 3.12 Feeding people
- 3.14.1 Building to suit Australian conditions
- 3.14.2 Using Australian materials in construction
- 4.3 Developing institutions
- 5.7 Surviving as Indigenous people in a white-dominated land
- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 6.5 Educating people in remote places
- 6.6 Educating Indigenous people in two cultures
- 8.6.2 Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies
- 8.6.3 Founding Australian religious Institutions
- 8.6.4 Making places for worship
- 8.6.7 Running missions to Australia's indigenous people

#### Heritage Council of Western Australia Theme(s)

- 103 Racial contact and interaction
- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 106 Workers (including Aboriginal, convict)
- 107 Settlements
- 108 Government Policy
- 301 Grazing, pastoralism and dairying
- 307 Intellectual activities, arts and crafts
- 309 Technology and technological change
- 310 Manufacturing and processing
- 311 Hospitality industry and tourism
- 402 Education and science
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 406 Religion
- 407 Cultural activities
- 408 Institutions
- 506 Tourism
- 601 Aboriginal People
- 603 Local heroes and battlers
- 604 Innovators

#### Comparative Analysis

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* is unique as the only monastic town in Australia. The place is a significantly early example of an Aboriginal mission, and also demonstrates the change in views, attitudes and treatment of Aboriginal people by religious organisations and the Western Australian Government from the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century.

The place was also an important educational provider for the regional area between 1908 and 1991. It is noted that although there are distinct orders within the Roman Catholic Church, including Benedictines, Pallottines, Redemptorists, and others, the congregation remains the broad Catholic Church. As an example, the Redemptorists at P2218 *Redemptorist Monastery and Church* (RHP) in Vincent provide retreats to clergy, religious and Catholic school children over the years, in the same way these have been provided at *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*. The recollections of Sister Veronica Willaway OSB, an Australian Aboriginal Sister from the Yued Noongar tribe who joined the Benedictine Missionary Sisters of New Norcia in 1958, suggest that it was common for such Orders to join different mission groups in varying locations in Australia (including Girraween, Rossmoyne<sup>48</sup>, and in Broome<sup>49</sup>), Spain, the Philippines and the USA.<sup>50</sup> However a review of Catholic monasteries and schools in Western Australia, including P1673 *Pallottine Monastery*, Mullewa (RHP), P2181 *Sacred Heart Catholic Group*, Perth (RHP) and P2218 *Redemptorist Monastery and Church* (RHP), indicates that the administration of St Gertrude's, which was operated by the Sisters of St Joseph, and St Ildephonsus' by the Marist Brothers, together with the resident Benedictine community, demonstrates a rare example of three Roman Catholic religious orders operating collaboratively from the same site.

Individually and collectively, the buildings and interior elements of *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* display striking aesthetic architectural value and demonstrate significant creative and technical expertise and significance to Western Australia.

*Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* addresses several historic themes associated with understanding the history of Western Australia, including Education, Social Services, Religion, Peopling WA and Rural occupations. While there are other examples of monasteries, Aboriginal missions, Catholic and secular school establishments and many churches that demonstrate a high degree of architectural excellence in Western Australia, there is no other place in the State that demonstrates these together. *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia* has outstanding value as an incomparable townscape in which religious, educational, service, hospitality and agricultural elements are underpinned by the Benedictine philosophy and way of life that has been maintained for over 150 years.

#### 13.4 KEY REFERENCES

*This is not a general bibliography but key sources such as conservation plans or books directly related to the place are noted.*

---

48 Pallottine Mission Centre (1955 - 1991)

49 Kalumburu Mission

50 Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, undated, News, Source: [Australian Aboriginal Benedictine Sister offers insight into extraordinary life \(perthcatholic.org.au\)](https://perthcatholic.org.au), Accessed March 2022.

Barker, A.J. *The WACA: An Australian Cricket Success Story*. Allen & Unwin, 1998, p. 14.

Bertinshaw, Ross, "Holy Waters: the development of criteria for the identification of the monkish wells of New Norcia in colonial Western Australia, in *Australasian Historical Archaeology*, 34, 2016.

Birt, Henry Norbert, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. II, London, 1911.

Byrne, Dom Francis OSB (ed), *80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary St Gertrude's College New Norcia 1908-1988*, 1988.

Byrne, Geraldine, *Valiant Women: letters from the foundation Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia, 1845-1849*.

Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia: St Gertrude's Chapel' interim Conservation Plan, prepared for Benedictine community of New Norcia, December 1996.

Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia Abbey Church', Conservation Plan, Appendix B, Volume 3 – Draft 16/1/97, 1997.

Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia; The Old Flour Mill', Conservation Plan, Appendix B, Volume 3 – Draft, February 1997.

Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia - The Apiary', Conservation Plan, Draft 30/4/98, April 1998.

Campbell, R McK, and I. H. Van Bremen, 'New Norcia – St Ildephonsus' College', Conservation Plan, First Draft, Appendix B, Volume 3, April 1998.

Carter, Anne IBVM, and Elizabeth Murphy RSJ, *A Rich Harvest: St Gertrude's College*, South Perth, 2006.

Community Arts Network, *Kep Gabi: Stories from Yued Country, Place Names Moora*, 2020.

Gillet, Peter, and Leen, Charles: *The Correspondence of Léandre Fonteinne by Léandre Fonteinne 1819-1897*.

Green, Neville, and Lois Tilbrook (eds), *Aborigines of New Norcia 1845-1914, The Bicentennial Dictionary of Western Australians*, Vol. VII, University of Western Australia Press, 1989.

Haebich, A. E. 2016 *Indigenous Child Removal and Settler Colonialism: an Historical Overview. Australian Indigenous Law Review* 19 (1).

Haebich, A., *For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, 1988.

Hutchison, David, Dom Chris Power OSB and Wendy Pearce (eds.), *A Town Like No Other: The Living Tradition of New Norcia*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1995.

Linage, Antonio, *Rosendo Salvado: Or the Odyssey of a Galician in Australia, Spain*, 1999.

McLay, Anne, *Women out of their sphere: a history of Sisters of Mercy in Western Australia from 1846*.

Massam, Katharine, "Cloistering the Mission: Abbot Torres and changes at New Norcia 1901-1910", in *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. 89 No. 1, January 2012.

Munt, Helen, "Documentary Evidence for P2622 Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia", prepared by Extent Heritage Pty Ltd for Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, December 2021.

O'Brien, Odhran, "The Curious Case of Bishop Brady – a new perspective", in *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 33, 2012.

Perez, Eugene Fr (transl.), Rosemary Pratt and Dr John Millington (eds), *The Torres Diaries 1901-1914*, Perth, 1987.

Pratt, Rosemary, Dr John Millington (eds), Eugene Perez (trans.), *The Torres Diaries, 1910-1914: diaries of Dom Fulgentius (Anthony) Torres y Mayans, OSB Abbot Nullius of New Norcia, Bishop Titular of Dorylaeum, Administrator Apostolic of the Kimberley Vicariate in North Western Australia*, The Kalumburu Book Trust, 1986.

Reece, Bob, "'Killing with Kindness': Daisy Bates and New Norcia", in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 32, 2008.

Reece, Bob, *The Invincibles: New Norcia's Aboriginal cricketers 1879-1906*, Histrionics, Fremantle, 2014.

Rooney, Bernard, "An Evolving Concept of Mission: New Norcia 1846-2006", *The Australasian Catholic Record*, Stathfield, Vol. 83, Issue 3, July 2006.

Russo, George, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness: The Life and Times of Bishop Salvado*, Melbourne, 1980.

Stannage, Tom, "New Norcia in History", *Studies in Western Australian History*, No. 29, 2015.

Stormon, E. J. (ed. trans.) *The Salvado Memoirs: Historical Memoirs of Australia and Particularly of the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia and of the Habits and Customs of the Australian Natives by Dom Rosendo Salvado, OSB.*, UWA Press, 1977.

### 13.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research into the archival collection of the Benedictine community may reveal primary sources of information not currently available in the public domain.

It is highly likely that historical archaeological deposits and surface artefacts and features are present across the *Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia*, associated with extant and former buildings and structures.

In addition, archaeological material may be present at the site of Salvado's failed 1846 mission camp hut, near Noondagoonda Pool on banks of Moore River, approximately eight kilometres north of the town.. Little is currently known about the site and further research would be required to ascertain cultural heritage significance.






HERITAGE  
COUNCIL

# HC CURTILAGE MAP P2622-C Benedictine Monastery Precinct, New Norcia

MAP 2 OF 3 PREPARED BY TIM KIPPO (MAPPING AND GIS OFFICER) 31/03/2022

424500 425000 425500 426000

6575000  
6574500  
6574000  
6573500  
6573000  
6572500  
6572000

  
0 75 150 225 300  
metres  
GDA 1994 MGA Zone 50

Produced by Heritage Assessment & Registration,  
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage,  
Copyright © March 2022



Base information supplied by  
Western Australian Land Information Authority  
SLIP 1096-2018-1

2018 aerial imagery supplied by  
Western Australian Land Information Authority  
(Scale 1:12,357; positional accuracy +/- 2m)

6575000  
6574500  
6574000  
6573500  
6573000  
6572500  
6572000



**Legend**

-  Proposed Curtilage
-  Cadastre

424500 425000 425500 426000