



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

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

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

The building is a fine example of Federation Gothic ecclesiastic architecture enhanced by its finely crafted stone tracery and shafted jamb to the entrance and the rendered decorative treatment which enhances the brickwork. (Criterion 1.1)

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church is a landmark in Kalgoorlie as a most imposing and decorative structure which contributes strongly to the visual character of Brookman Street. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

The place has some historic value as a site of continuous worship since 1896, when the original Roman Catholic Church, one of the earliest churches in Kalgoorlie, was constructed. (Criterion 2.1)

The construction of *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* is closely associated with the rapid population growth in the eastern goldfields at the turn-of-the-century. (Criterion 2.2)

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church has significance as part of the architectural design produced by Cavanagh and Cavanagh, who were responsible for the design of the majority of Catholic Church buildings in Western Australia at the turn of the century.

11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church is representative of tall and large-scale Federation Gothic ecclesiastic architecture. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3. CONDITION

The building is well maintained and *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* is in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

The Church continues to be used for its original function. *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* retains a high degree of integrity.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

The building is intact and *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* retains a high degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Julia Ball, Historian. The physical evidence has been compiled by Kelly Aris, Conservation Architect.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church is an imposing brick and cement shingle covered building (the original roofing material was slate), constructed in 1902 to replace the inadequate original corrugated iron church structure built in 1896.

In Kalgoorlie, all the major Christian denominations set about building substantial places of worship as soon as a congregation could be mustered. With a high percentage of early settlers either Irish born or of Irish descent, Roman Catholicism was prominent on the goldfields.

Bishop Matthew Gibney made frequent visits to the fields. Kalgoorlie's original Catholic Church was opened on 17 March 1896, having been built at a cost of £1,081.¹ In all, eight churches were built in the early years. They were all located within a few hundred yards of the junction of Maritana and Hannan streets. By 1901, there were 27 churches and 15 other places of worship.²

By the early 1900s, the original Catholic Church had become inadequate and in 1902 plans were underway for the construction of a new larger church to a design by Cavanagh and Cavanagh (Perth), who were responsible for the design of the majority of Catholic Church buildings in Western Australia at the turn of the century.

The contract for the building was let to Mr S. Campbell of Subiaco under the supervision of joint architects Messrs Hawkins & Sprigg (Kalgoorlie). The *Western Argus* reported on its progress:

Unquestionably the new church for the Roman Catholic Community, now in the course of erection, will when completed, be the most pretentious piece of ecclesiastical architecture to be seen locally. The building, which is designed in the form of a Latin Cross, is being constructed of red Coolgardie brick. Its length is 127ft. while the width across the nave is 37ft and 70ft. at the transepts. The sanctuary is finished with apsidal end. On each side of the High Altar are two smaller ones. The Altar of the Blessed Virgin on the right and the Altar of the Sacred Heart on the left. At the back of these are the sacristy and the working sacristy, and facing the Altars on each side of the transepts are the confessionals.

The style of architecture is Gothic, simple and attractive, of the decorated early English Period. In the completed design a tower and spire on the North Western angle is provided, as well as a baptistery, but at present it is not intended to carry out this part of the plans. The Western and the transept gables are to have five light windows, while the jambs, arch, Mullions, and tracery are to be of Sydney freestone. The whole will be covered by a slate roof. ... The cost of the completed design will be about £7,000.³

¹ Webb, M. & A., *Golden Destiny: The Centenary History of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia* (City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Kalgoorlie, 1993), p. 551.

² *ibid.*, p. 553.

³ *Western Argus* 21 October 1902, pp. 22-23.

The original church remained in use, being used as the church hall until the early to mid-1970s, when it was demolished to make way for the construction of a new Parish Centre.

In March 1996, the centenary of the Roman Catholic Church in Kalgoorlie was marked by the unveiling of a special stained glass window in *St Mary's Roman Catholic Church* by the Archbishop of Perth, the Rt. Rev. Barry James Hickey. Local artist Deborah Francis was commissioned by the Church to create the window, which reflects where the Church has come from with sections featuring old buildings and old mining activities and flora and fauna from the Goldfields region.⁴

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

St Mary's Roman Catholic Church is on the north-west corner of Porter and Brookman streets and is built in the Federation Gothic style.⁵ The building is tall and large in scale. Adjacent is the parish centre built on the site of the original church constructed in 1896.⁶ The building is in a bituminised setting with a carpark on the north side. An iron palisade fence on a brick plinth with brick piers extends the length of the boundaries of Brookman and Porter streets.

The building is cruciform in plan, with porticos to the northern and southern transept, and a nave conventionally orientated east-west with a polygonal apse. A tower and font allowed for in the design were not constructed.

The red Coolgardie brick building has tall walls supported by corbelled buttresses at regular centres around the building.⁷ At the corners of the building the corbelled buttresses are extended above the gables to form turrets. The corbels of the buttresses are accentuated by rendered small gables. The building has a rendered plinth which is ornamentally moulded, and the underside of the roof is finished with a rendered frieze consisting of dentils and small arches. There are tall lancet windows between each buttress.

The building has a high-pitched gable roof with rendered gable ends and cement copings. The roof, originally covered with slate, is covered with cement shingles.

The roof lacks ornamentation other than the rendered turrets at the gable ends, small decorative roof vents, and a rendered cross that decorates the apex of each gable.

The walls are face brick laid in English bond. The nave is five bays long and the transepts one bay wide. The window in each bay of the nave contains two-light lancets with decorative plate tracery and a central top light, and defined by rendered reveals crowned with hood moulds. The detailing is typical of early English design and reminiscent of Castle Hall, Winchester.

⁴ *Goldfields Magazine* 23 February 1996, p. 10.

⁵ Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* (Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1994) pp. 120 - 123.

⁶ The date the original church was demolished is unknown, but The National Trust of Australia (WA) documentation indicates the building was in existence in 1973.

⁷ Two buttresses on the south elevation are constructed to accommodate additions.

The transept gables and the western entrance have lancet windows grouped in five lights with bar tracery. The transepts feature small triple lancet windows. The windows are defined by rendered reveals crowned with hood moulds. The windows contain stained and leaded glass and the lower panes have pivot sashes.

The exterior of the polygonal apse features a heavily moulded battlemented parapet that extends around the apse. The apse comprises five wide lancets, separated by buttresses that extend beyond the battlemented parapet. The lancets contain leaded and stained glass with the exception of the centre lancet which has plain glass. The windows have louvred screens secured over the windows on the exterior face. A pyramidal roof covers the apse.

The entrance to the narthex features a pointed arch doorway with a shafted jamb. An ornamental masonry cross hangs above the doorway.

The church interior is highly decorative. The roof is constructed of hammer beam trusses with carved timber rafters supported by rendered decorative timber brackets. The interior has timber floorboards and rendered walls.

The interior of the narthex features timber panelled walls and ceiling. A carved timber stair leads to the upper gallery. The gallery is supported by timber columns and arches. The detailing is simple and elegant. The high altar is framed by two smaller altars within the transept; the altar of the Blessed Virgin on the east and the altar of the Sacred Heart on the west. The altars feature small recessed arches. The high altar is framed by a wide arch supported by a group of three columns with Corinthian capitals. The crossing features timber cross beams.

The timber pews have carved tops at the aisle end.

Although confessionals, on the west side of the transepts, appear on the original drawings changes in bondwork suggest they are additions.⁸ External window protection has been installed in recent times to protect the stained glass windows from vandalism. The windows are covered by white wire mesh, set into a light weight frame and fixed to the outside of the brickwork.

13.3 REFERENCES

National Trust Assessment Exposition, February 1976.

⁸ *Western Argus*, 21 October 1902, p. 23.
Register of Heritage Places - Assessment Doc'n
Church
21/01/1997