



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

St. John's Church is a fine example of Old Colonial Gothick Picturesque architecture. (Criterion 1.1)

St. John's Church Group in its landscaped setting has a landmark quality in York Street. The place forms a contrast to the commercialism of Albany's main thoroughfare of York Street. (Criterion 1.3)

Together with the *St. John's Hall*, the adjacent war memorial and *Scots Church* opposite, *St. John's Church Group* helps define the intersection of Peels Place and York Street. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

St. John's Church Group, is associated with the early development of Albany. (Criterion 2.1)

St. John's Church is significant as it is believed to have been the first church consecrated in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

St. John's Church Group is highly valued by the Anglican community as it comprises one of their earliest places of worship in Western Australia. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12.1 RARITY

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

12.3 CONDITION

St. John's Church is in sound condition and has been maintained with great care. The condition of the *Rectory* is sound; however, it is uncertain whether the dampness to the west facade has been arrested.

12.4 INTEGRITY

St. John's Church retains a high degree of integrity.

The *Rectory* has undergone additions to the exterior and interior of the building. The spatial configuration of the interior has not altered and the original building fabric is easily identifiable. The building retains its original function and has a high degree of integrity.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

St. John's Church retains a high degree of authenticity.

The *Rectory* has undergone additions and alterations to the exterior and interior of the building. The interior modifications are minor and can be easily reinstated. The modifications to the exterior fabric of the building are more substantial and although reinstatement of the fabric is achievable, the authenticity of the building has been reduced and therefore, has a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

St. John's Church Group comprises two buildings: *St. John's Church* (1841-1848) and the *Rectory* (1850, 1875).

St. John's Church is an Anglican church, constructed between 1841 and 1848 to provide a place of religious worship for the Church of England community in Albany and surrounding districts.

Despite a growing population, it was many years before a church of any denomination was established. In 1836, Mr. T. B. Sherratt attempted to provide a religious focal point when he built a small octagonal, lath and plaster building on the south-east corner of Duke and Parade Streets, known as the Octagonal Church.¹

In April 1841, a public meeting was held at the Octagon Church and it was decided to establish an Anglican church. Peter Belches, Edward Spencer, George Cheyne, T. B. Sherratt and J. R. Phillips were elected as Trustees. They started collecting funds, were granted a block of land on the corner of York Street and Peels Place, and building commenced.²

However, the depressed economic conditions of the 1840s made building funds difficult to obtain, and the construction of the building, without a roof, came to a standstill. Attempts to progress the work were unsuccessful until 1848, when a government grant was acquired to finish the roof and support a clergyman. The tender to complete the roof amounted to £88 and the architect was Mr. Sinclair.³

On 8 July 1848, the Reverend. John Rammsden Wollaston (1791-1856) arrived in Albany to become the first resident clergyman. He described the building progress of the Church:

The rafters were finished at the end of July and the shingling of the roof at the end of September, with sheoak ... Inspired volunteers met in excellent spirit to get the Church forward ... Carts, horses, bullocks and men carrying sand to level the floor, two carpenters preparing the Altar flooring. Altar rails, material for Altar cushions and (in the absence of glass) calico to be oiled for the windows, purchased from an American Whaler then in Port. The curtains and cushions all worked by the deft fingers of the Church's daughters. Laid the inside of the Church with a lime floor, after the West Indian method, well trodden and rammed and smoothed with sugar water.⁴

Although incomplete when Wollaston arrived, sufficient work had been completed in time for the church to be consecrated during a visit to Albany by Bishop Short of Adelaide, on 25 October 1848. According to author D. Garden, *St. John's* was the first church in the colony to be consecrated.⁵

¹ This church has since been demolished.

² Garden, D., *Albany: A Panorama of the Sound from 1827*, (Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited, 1977), p. 90.

³ See attached plan.

⁴ Cited in, St Johns Anglican Church, 'The Church of Saint Johns the Evangelist Albany: The First Church Consecrated in Western Australia,' (1968), p. 6.

⁵ Garden, p. 90.

The following is Bishop Short's account of the consecration:

It is a striking picture, this new stone Church, standing in the centre of the town, incomplete as it is ... Whenever the tower shall be finished it will give additional beauty to the scene ... But even as it is the House of God is as it always should be, the principal building that meets the eye as you cast anchor in the harbour ... with its grey granite walls and pointed windows it imparts a feeling of home, even in this distant nook so sequestered from the other settled parts of Australasia.⁶

On 9 November 1848, a decision was made to build a parsonage. On the 13 February 1849, Mr Thomas successfully tendered for the construction of the parsonage for the sum of £109.1. On 20 August 1850, the Rector moved in to the parsonage. The *Rectory* is built of Devonshire cobb with walls 18 inches thick.⁷

Work continued on *St. John's Church* and in 1853, the distinctive tower was added. It had been included in the original plans; however, by omitting the tower at the time of the original construction, the tender was substantially reduced. In 1874, the chancel was added to the Church and a gallery, completed in 1852, at the back of the Nave was removed.⁸

In 1875, a second-storey was added to the *Rectory* and the kitchen was raised.⁹

In 1891, the present organ was purchased for the church, from Hill & Son of London for £160. In 1892, gas lighting was introduced and the following year the match-board ceiling was installed in the nave.

No further major additions/alterations were undertaken until 1961, when the Lady Chapel and vestries were added. Later, in 1968, as a result of a bequest, the chancel of the Church was extended to provide an adequate sanctuary and to further develop the cruciform plan of the building. Architect Mr. H. Smith was responsible.

Throughout *St. John's Church* there are a number of large stained glass windows, one dating back to 1874.

In 1994, *St. John's Church Group* continues to be used as a place of worship, and still plays an integral part in the religious lives of many Albany residents.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

St. John's Church is built in Old Colonial Gothick Picturesque¹⁰ and is set in the manner of English landscaped gardens. It is designed as part of a total picturesque scene with contrived landscaping.

The church has 54 cm thick stone walls and stone foundations, and gabled roofs. The stone is believed to have been quarried from Mts Clarence and Melville.¹¹ An unusual feature of the walls is the lack of buttresses. Due to

⁶ Cited in, St Johns Anglican Church, p. 6.

⁷ RAlA Architects Advisory Service, 'Architectural Evaluation: St Johns Albany - Church, Rectory and Hall', (for the Heritage Committee, n.d.).

⁸ See attached plan.

⁹ *ibid*, RAlA Evaluation.

¹⁰ Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P., *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*, (Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989), pp. 36-39.

¹¹ The Parish Church of Albany, 'Saint John the Evangelist, The First Anglican Church Consecrated in Western Australia', n.d., p. 2.

the strength of the stone walls, buttressing was not required. The building is planned as two unequal oblongs: the original building now the nave (15.3m long x 7.93m wide) of the present church and a gallery behind which was completed in 1852. The buildings have medium pitched gabled roofs covered with sheoak shingles.

In 1853, a porch, surmounted by a square tower, was added to the church to provide access off York Street. Built in matching stone, the tower is capped with a battlemented parapet, is decorated with string courses and features small lancet openings with louvred infills and blind lancets. It is an imposing entrance, and a striking landmark.

The addition of the Lady Chapel (1961) to the south-west corner of the building and the addition of the vestry (1961) to the north-west corner together with the western extension of the sanctuary (1968), created a cruciform plan. The gabled roofed additions were built in a style to match the existing church. A wall of the chapel is believed to include a stone from the walls of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, which had been dislodged during bombing in WWII.¹²

Lancet windows are divided by masonry mullions into two and three light openings with intersecting tracery. The windows in the nave and the three light windows in the sanctuary and the chapel feature fine stained glass. The roof is adorned with carved bargeboards concealing the lining boards of the boxed eaves.

The entrance doors are constructed of vertical timber boarding with heavy iron nails and hinges. The openings to the vestry and chapel are recessed with hood-moulds above.

The timber roof of the interior was plainly treated with visible rafters in the chancel and sanctuary, a feature typical of nineteenth century English parish churches, and a matchboard ceiling (1893) in the nave.¹³ The floor of the central aisle in the nave is covered with coloured tiles laid in a geometric pattern which carries the eye along to the sanctuary.

The interior walls are painted render. The windows, in particular the three light altar window at the western end of the sanctuary and the iron cancelli of the chancel (converted gallery), which dates from 1874, relieve the bareness of the interior. The stained glass of the altar window is a memorial to King Edward VII, and was installed in 1912. In 1920, the first moir glass was installed to a window in the nave. In 1922, the window depicting the resurrection was installed, and in 1923, a second window was installed with moir glass.¹⁴

Other interior features include a carved timber arch that identifies the "crossing" of nave and transepts and an arched opening to the sanctuary. Timber panelling decorates the wall behind the altar, and organ pipes decorate the northern wall of the chancel.

Skylights have recently been installed to the chancel.¹⁵

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Cited in, St Johns Anglican Church, p. 3.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Date unknown.

In April 1994, window protection in the form of poly carbonate sheeting was installed within the window reveals to protect the stained glass from vandalism.

The *Rectory* was built in 1850, as a single-storey stone house. The building is constructed of Devonshire cob with walls approximately 450 mm thick in an "L" shaped plan and has a hipped roof clad in shingles. The shingled roof was later clad in corrugated iron¹⁶

The interior comprises a central entry hall with a sitting and dining room either side of the entry at the front of the house. A kitchen and study are behind. A larder at the end of the hall is accessed from the kitchen across a passage. A bathroom and laundry are at the end of the passage.

The exterior of the building features double hung sash windows with small panes.

According to a report written by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Advisory Service, in 1875, a brick, second storey, to accommodate four bedrooms, and a two-storey verandah, to three sides of the building, were added to The *Rectory*.¹⁷ The roof was covered in metal imitation tiles.¹⁸

The *Rectory* underwent extensive restoration to the exterior.¹⁹ The stonework to three exterior walls was restored, the verandah floor covered with concrete and the verandahs replaced in modern details. A garage and covered walkway, clad in corrugated iron, were added to the southern side of the building.

Modifications were also made to the interior of the building. Cornices and plasterboard ceilings were installed in the kitchen and sitting rooms, covered the original lathe and plaster ceilings.²⁰ In the 1960s, the cupboards in the kitchen were replaced and the pine floorboards in bedroom 1 were replaced with jarrah.²¹

At the time of a building inspection carried out by the RAIA Advisory Service, the condition of the place was reported as good, with the exception of dampness and structural cracks in the west wall.²²

13.3 REFERENCES

RAIA Architects Advisory Service, 'Architectural Evaluation: St Johns Albany - Church, Rectory and Hall', (for the Heritage Committee, n.d.).

Australian Heritage Commission Data Sheet.

¹⁶ Date unknown.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, RAIA Architects Advisory Service, 'Architectural Evaluation'

¹⁸ Type of metal used and date of work unknown.

¹⁹ Date unknown. Photographs taken in 1974 show the building additions and restoration work.

²⁰ *ibid.*, RAIA Architectural Evaluation.

²¹ Date unknown.

²² Date of the inspection is unknown. A reference in the report refers to 1977 and it is assumed the inspection was carried out in the late 1970s to mid 1980s.