

## FORMER CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD



FORMER CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SOHE 2008



FORMER CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SOHE 2008



FORMER CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SOHE 2008



1 former convent of the good shepherd clarke street abbotsford view of property nov1981 etc.



former convent of the good shepherd clarke street abbotsford arcaded walkway jun1984 etc



former convent of the good shepherd courtyard jun1992



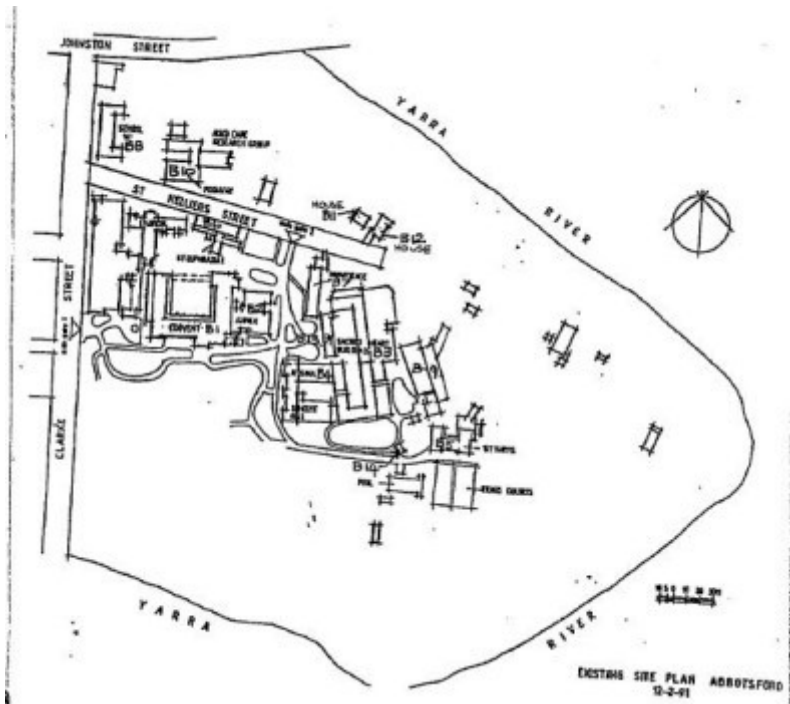
former convent of the good shepherd clarke street abbotsford detail of statue nov1986



former convent of the good shepherd clarke street abbotsford front view jun1984



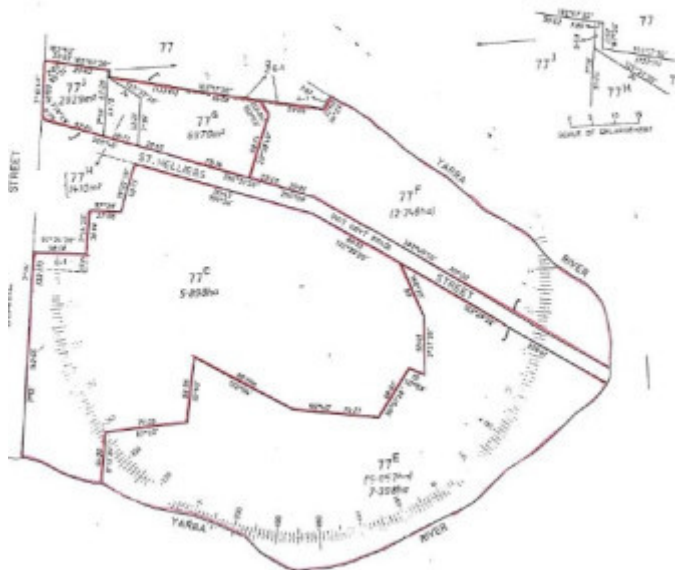
former convent of the good shepherd clarke street abbotsford rear view



Plan A

REPORT TO THE MINISTER  
Extent of Designation

ATTACHMENT B  
PLAN 6049167(B)  
CP 111 536



Plan B

## Location

CLARKE STREET AND ST HELLIERS STREET ABBOTSFORD, YARRA CITY

## **Municipality**

YARRA CITY

## **Level of significance**

Registered

## **Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0951

## **Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO9

## **VHR Registration**

August 20, 1982

## **Amendment to Registration**

January 21, 1993

## **Heritage Listing**

Victorian Heritage Register

---

## **Statement of Significance**

Last updated on - August 19, 2022

### **What is significant?**

The Convent of the Good Shepherd at Abbotsford is a large, relatively intact and architecturally distinctive example of a Roman Catholic convent complex. It includes ecclesiastical, residential, educational and utility buildings constructed during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a rural setting on a bend of the Yarra River close to the city as well as to the inner suburban slums. This secluded site was chosen by four Irish sisters from the Good Shepherd's mother house in Angers, France, who arrived in Melbourne in 1863, and established the Order on what had been two large 1840s villa estates, St Heliers and Abbotsford House. From the late 1860s the site accommodated the Magdalen Asylum, which was essentially a women's refuge, a reformatory for young offenders, and an industrial school complex for the care and training of children who were disadvantaged or neglected. At the end of the 1870s a Catholic day school was added. More land was purchased in the 1880s and 1890s to include all of the land between Clarke Street and the Yarra River. This allowed for the construction of the large laundry buildings, which were to become the primary source of income for the convent. The institution provided for the care of thousands of women and girls through a variety of welfare and court-based rehabilitation and protection programs. There was a massive expansion program in the early twentieth century, with the construction of a new Convent building and adjacent contemplative garden, and new buildings for classrooms, a refectory and dormitories. Most of these were designed by the architectural firm Reed Smart & Tappin. The convent became one of the largest self-sufficient convent and farm complexes in Australia: at its peak it housed, fed and clothed a population of over a thousand, and hundreds more children attended the day schools. There were extensive vegetable gardens and orchards on the southern slopes, grazing land for milking cows and horses to the east, and large numbers of pigs and poultry were kept.

In 1975 the site was purchased by the Victorian Government as a higher education campus, with funding from the Federal Government. The proposed redevelopment of the site in the late 1990s led to a massive community-based heritage battle which resulted in 2004 in the transfer of the convent site south of St Heliers Street to the

Abbotsford Convent Foundation for community use. The site is now divided into three parts: the north-west part of the site, including the chapel, which has been retained by the Order; the Collingwood Children's Farm, established in 1979 on the former farm land to the east; and the remainder of the former convent site, including the gardens, controlled by the Foundation.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is a cohesive complex of picturesque ecclesiastical, residential, educational and utility buildings, largely two- or three-storey brick buildings in a Gothic Revival style, set amidst magnificent grounds. To the south of the convent is a picturesque garden with a central lawn and surrounded by shrubberies, a timber rotunda, curved paths and formal paths lined with elm and oak avenue plantings associated with the former grounds of Abbotsford House. The lower garden contains a former orchard area, and to the east is former grazing and farm land. The site retains remnant River Red Gums and vistas to the indigenous bushland of Yarra Bend Park and the Yarra River.

The main building on the site is the Convent building and annexe (containing the former kitchens) (1900-1903), one of the key buildings of the early twentieth century expansion, notable for its use of roughcast on the walls. Other major buildings are: the two-storey brick Industrial School for neglected children (1868); the Magdalen Asylum (or Sacred Heart) (by the architect Thomas Kelly, 1877); St Euphrasia's school (1879); Mercator, the main laundry building (from c1885 to 1964); the North Laundry (c1885-1925) and the South Laundry (1907); Providence (1887, 1905), built as school accommodation; St Anne's (1906), part of the Magdalen Asylum, which completed the enclosure of the Magdalen Asylum courtyard; Rosina, the former Sacred Heart Class (1908), designed in the Baroque Revival style; and St Mary's Preservation Class (1911), also in the Baroque Revival style. Many notable interior features survive. Part of the original boundary wall survives from the 1860s.

### **How is it significant?**

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is of historical, architectural, scientific (botanical), aesthetic and archaeological significance to the state of Victoria.

### **Why is it significant?**

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is historically significant as the only existing former monastic or convent farm surviving in a substantial manner within a city in Australia. It is the site of the largest self-sufficient convent and monastic building and farm complex in the state, with extensive vegetable gardens, orchards and grazing land. The large-scale agricultural operations were remarkable for an inner-city location. The farm and the massive laundry buildings were major symbols of the convent and of the objectives of the Order.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is historically significant as the birthplace in Australia of the Good Shepherd Order, one of the most important religious institutional complexes within the Catholic Church in Victoria, which provided for the refuge and care of thousands of women and girls through a variety of welfare, rehabilitation and protection programs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was the first convent of the Order in Australia and New Zealand, and was the Mother House and Novitiate for the Order in Australasia. The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is historically significant as a demonstration of changing approaches to the institutional care, reform and education of disadvantaged women and children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is historically significant for its role during the early years of church-based education after the 1872 Education Act ended state funding to Denominational schools, and the subsequent expansion of church-based education.

The former Convent is historically significant for its association with two of Melbourne's earliest villa estates, Abbotsford House and St Heliers, built by two of its most prominent citizens, Edward Curr and Samuel Orr, which occupied this site from the 1840s, and of which traces still remain.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of a nineteenth century religious complex, with buildings constructed in various periods but in a consistent Gothic Revival style, reflecting the contemporary interest in Medievalism and strongly influenced by the French Mother House. These include the early buildings designed by Thomas Kelly, and those designed in the major building campaign of 1900-1911, mainly by William Tappin, with others by Reed, Smart & Tappin, one of Victoria's major architectural firms of that period. It is significant for the intact interiors, notably in the convent buildings, kitchens and laundries.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is of scientific (botanical) significance for its collection of mature shrubs and trees of considerable age, including two outstanding English Oaks (*Quercus robur*), a fine Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) remnant River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), some rare plants including *Dombeya tiliacea*, and *Vitex lucens*.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is of aesthetic significance for the architectural cohesion of the complex, for the designed landscape elements and natural attributes, for the bushland vistas, and for its rural setting on the Yarra River, which has been retained despite the development of surrounding areas. It is a key visual landmark in the area, and notable for the views of the site from the Johnston Street Bridge, from the Kew

side of the river, and from the Children's farm.

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd is of archaeological significance for its potential to provide evidence of the former occupation of the site.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

Water-proofing works and external repairs being roof and rainwater plumbing and window and door repairs and painting as described in the documentation prepared by Denton Corker Marshall described in the following documents being:

SO 9C1.Timber Windows, SO9C2 Repair of Steel Windows, S11A General metalwork, S12A Door Frames, S12B Doors, S12c door Hard ware included in attached Specification Register for the Abbotsford Convent Refurbishment SRT rev No. 02, Date 23/12/04 Project no. 7157A The Drawings as referred to in the Drawing File Register for the Abbotsford Convent Refurbishment, Drawing Set A0200 – 0699 Series Heritage Planning DRT rev No. 01, Date 23/12/04 Project no. 7157A

Construction dates	1899,
Architect/Designer	Reed, Smart & Tappin,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	ABBOTSFORD CONVENT, ST HELLIERS,
Hermes Number	1
Property Number	

---

## History

Associated People: Assoc.People JOHN ORR  
Assoc.People JOHN ORR

## Extent of Registration

### AMENDMENT OF REGISTER OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic Building No. 951.

Former Convent of the Good Shepherd complex off Clarke and St Helliers Streets, Abbotsford.

(To the extent of:

1. All the following buildings, structures and works including roads and paths, fences, gates and remnant walls and buildings marked B-1 to B-14 inclusive on Plan 6049167 (A), endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council to include:

B1 Convent

B2 Convent Kitchen

B3 Sacred Heart

B4 Rosina

B5 St Mary's

B6 St Euphrasia's

B7 Providence

B8 Kindergarten

B9 Mercator

B10 Lourdes

B11 House No. 1

B12 House No. 2

B13 St Anne's

B14 Cemetery.

2. All of that land marked L-1 on Plan 6049167 (B), endorsed by the Chairperson, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council being all of Crown Allotments 77C, 77E, 77F, 77G, 77H, 77J, County of Bourke, Parish of Jika Jika as shown on CP 111536 (See Appendix A.)

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No. G3 21 January 1993 pp.155-156]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*