
Convent of the Good Shepherd complex, Former



Abbotsford Convent



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1860-1902 - former house on site.jpg

Location

off Clarke & St Heliers Streets, ABBOTSFORD VIC 3067 - Property No 110425

Municipality

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0951

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO9

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - September 6, 2008

The buildings of this property are on the Victorian Heritage Register - H951.

For more information on this property, refer to the Victorian Heritage Register information.

The grounds of the convent are subject to Council control.

The following wording is from the John Patrick Landscape Citation, 1998 for the property. Please note that this is a "Landscape Citation", not a "Statement of Significance". For further information refer to the Landscape Citation held by the City of Yarra.

Landscape Citation, 1998

Description

The site of the former St Heliers Convent was originally purchased as part of Crown Portions 77(23a) & 64 (12a) by Major Henry Smyth of Sydney in 1838, and leased to John Hodgson. In 1842 it was purchased by the Hon. Isaac Erskine Murray and subdivision was commenced. In July of that year, seven acres were sold to John Orr, which became the Abbotsford Estate, and development commenced shortly thereafter. An irregular piece of land to the east was sold to Edward Curr, which became the St Heliers Estate. In 1853 the St Heliers Estate was leased. In 1857, the Abbotsford Estate was sold by Orr, though leased by a Mr Moss. Part of the estate was purchased by The Good Shepherd Sisters in 1863 as their first convent. They purchased the St Heliers estate in 1865. The lower portion of the site, adjacent to the Yarra River was used for utilitarian purposes-fruit and vegetables, livestock, etc.

A sketch dated 1901 shows a very young garden, which was probably laid out following the construction of the main convent building, and which was officially opened in that year. Early photographs of the site taken 1912-1915 show a juvenile garden, with few trees of any size, supporting the view that the formal garden was laid out following the construction, or as part of the construction, of the main convent building. The formal garden was rectangular in shape, enclosed to the south and east by hedges, and a fence along the Clarke Street frontage. It featured dense shrubberies with an over canopy of trees, many of which survive today, and a meandering path along the perimeter of the garden.

Remnant Fabric (Man Made)

The system of paths throughout the garden was laid out in the early 20th century following the construction of the main convent building. The gazebo in the lower section of the garden is also believed to have been constructed at this time.

Remnant Fabric (Vegetation)

The site contains a large number of mature trees including a Common Oak (*Quercus robur*) near the swimming pool, classified by The National Trust of Australia (Victoria), and another Common Oak recorded by the Trust. Both predate the current garden layout, and may be remnants from the early pre-convent history of the site. The Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) adjacent to the main Convent building was planted in 1903. Other trees of note include a remnant River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) at the St Helier Street frontage and a number of very large Pepper Trees (*Schinus molle*) situated throughout the site. Mature Cork Oaks (*Quercus suber*), Dutch Elms (*Ulmus x hollandica*) and screens of Lombardy Poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italica') are located in the southern section of the site, which was used for pastoral and utilitarian purposes. The southern formal garden contains a number of mature and unusual trees and shrubs such as Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) and Puriri (*Vitex lucens*).

Statement of Significance

St Heliers convent is regionally significant for the extensive grounds associated with the development of the site, and which provide a suitable setting to the massing and scale of the original convent buildings. The site retains much of its rural ambience, although it is surrounded by urban development. The gardens contain an umber of mature trees, many of which are uncommon in contemporary landscapes. Two of these trees are featured on the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) Significant Tree Register.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Yarra - City of Collingwood Conservation Study, Andrew Ward & Associates, 1989; Yarra - City of Collingwood Conservation Study, Andrew Ward & Associates, 1995; Yarra - City of Yarra Heritage Review, Allom Lovell & Associates, 1998; Yarra - City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas, Graeme Butler & Associates, 2007;
Construction dates	1850,
Hermes Number	103829
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Allom Allom Allom Lovell, 1998:

The former Convent of the Good Shepherd comprises a complex of buildings picturesquely sited on a large landscaped site bounded by the Yarra River to the north, east and south. Built in stages over a forty year period, the most significant buildings include the main convent building and Annex, the Sacred Heart Building, St Anne's, St Euphrasia's, Providence and Rosina. Typical of 19th century institutional complexes, the buildings are planned around courtyards.

The main convent building is located at the west end of the site adjacent to the chapel. It is a three-storey, U-shaped building comprising three gable wings around a central open quadrangle. The building is of unpainted roughcast rendered brick construction, with brick dressings to the door and window openings. The gabled roofs are clad in slate. A segmental arched verandah runs along the central section of the south elevation with buttressed piers to the ground floor and a skillion roofed verandah to the first floor. The open cloisters along the east and west sides of the quadrangle have columns with foliated Romanesque capitals on brick and roughcast rendered pedestals, and square impost blocks which support stilted lancet arches. The window openings along the ground floor have stilted lancet arched heads, the first floor are lancet arched and the second floor have flat lancet arches.

The Convent Annex is located immediately to the east of the main convent and comprises two single-storey pavilions, of brick construction with corrugated iron gabled roofs.

The original 1868 section at the north end of the Sacred Heart building comprises an L-shaped double-storey red brick structure with bluestone footings and buttresses, with a hipped slate roof. The southern section is a two and three-storey U-shaped brick building with bluestone footings, stepped buttresses and hipped and gable roofs clad with terracotta tiles. The elevations which face onto the central courtyard have a roughcast rendered finish, with smooth cement rendered lintels and sills to the door and window openings. Paired double-hung sashes replace the original window joinery.

St Anne's is a rectangular planned single-storey structure which encloses the north-west side of the courtyard. It is of brick construction with buttressed external walls and a terracotta tiled hipped roof with overhanging eaves. The walls are roughcast rendered and have ruled rendered trims. The windows are paired double-hung sashes and doors are flush panel timber or half glazed vertical boarded doors with fanlights.

St Euphrasia's is a double-storey brick structure with bluestone footings and a gabled slate roof. A gabled pediment, located centrally along the main north elevation, is surmounted by a pressed cement cross. The walls are ruled ashlar render with stepped buttresses and with a string course between the floors. The original door and window openings appear originally to have had segmental arched heads, and have been modified to form square-headed rectilinear openings with paired and triple steel-framed double-hung sashes. The chimneys are ruled ashlar render with moulded caps. A steel-framed asbestos cement clad two-storey addition has been constructed along the rear, or south, elevation.

Providence, similar to St Euphrasia's, is a double-storey, rectangular planned, brick structure with bluestone footings and a slate gabled roof with parapeted gable ends. The north, south and west elevations are ashlar rendered with a string course between the floors. The west elevation is red face brick with bluestone lintels and sills.

Planned in a U-shape, Rosina comprises a central double-storey wing with two single-storey pavilions at the rear, enclosing a central courtyard. The brick building is designed in an Edwardian Baroque style. The central wing has a gabled slate roof with projecting pedimented parapeted gable end bays. The external walls and roughcast rendered, with ruled render trim.

Integrity

Good

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/>