

# ST ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH



ST ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH SOHE 2008



1 st andrews uniting church beechworth front view



st andrews uniting church beechworth exterior church nave



st andrews uniting church beechworth side view



St Andrews



St Andrews interior



St Andrews interior



St Andrews significant trees



Sunday school at rear

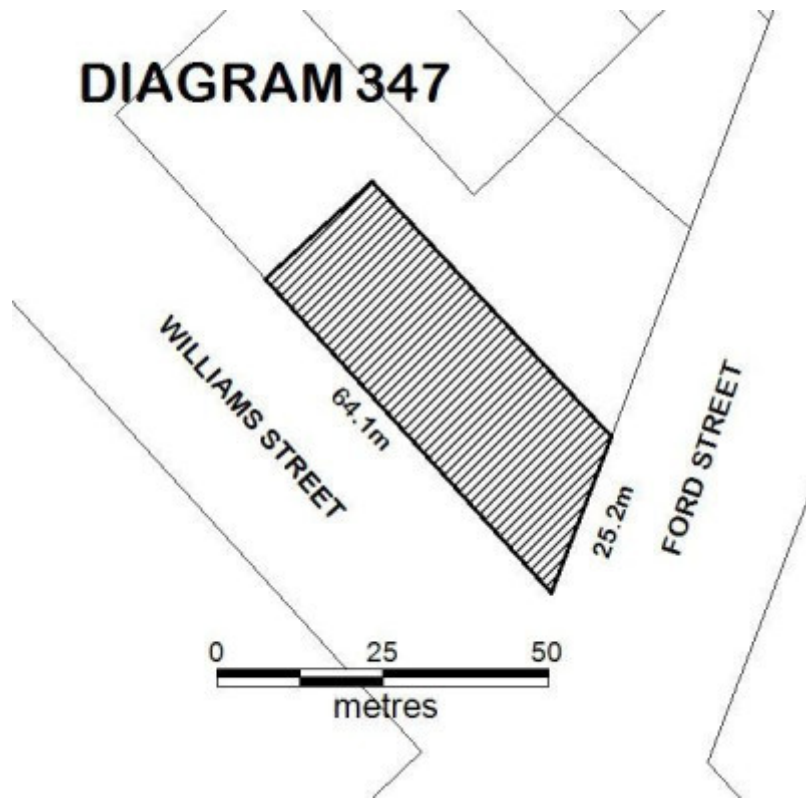


diagram 347.JPG

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**Location**

115 FORD STREET BEECHWORTH, INDIGO SHIRE

**Municipality**

INDIGO SHIRE

**Level of significance**

Registered

**Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number**

H0347

**Heritage Overlay Numbers**

HO74

**VHR Registration**

October 9, 1974

**Amendment to Registration**

April 9, 2015

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church in Beechworth, consisting of the stone 1857 church, the 1883 brick Sunday school and hall at the rear, the gateposts on the Ford Street corner and the Grey Myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*) in front of the church.

History Summary

The first Presbyterian services in the Beechworth area were conducted from 1852 by a visiting minister for the benefit of the Scottish and Ulster Presbyterians who had settled in north-east Victoria following the gold rushes. The first minister was appointed in 1857, and on 6 July that year the foundation stone was laid for a new church building which opened on 25 February 1858. The architect was Thomas Turnbull and the builders were Smith, Bank & Cranston. The Rev J K McMillan was minister from 1859-69, during which time he established congregations at Bright, Benalla, Chiltern, Mansfield, Wangaratta and Yackandandah, before becoming Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of Victoria in 1878. A manse was erected during McMillan's time (now replaced). A Sunday school had been held at the church since 1857, with 177 children enrolled by 1869, and a new Sunday School building was constructed adjoining the rear of the church in 1883. Beechworth had a large population of Chinese miners, who faced problems of poverty and loneliness. From 1859-1936 the church carried out missionary work among the local Chinese population, with Chinese catechists employed. The church became a Uniting Church after 1977, following the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Australia.

Description Summary

St Andrew's Uniting Church is a Gothic Revival style building, with a corrugated iron-clad roof. It is constructed of stone, and is stuccoed on the front facade. In the centre front is an unusual square tower with panel-backed buttresses on the corners surmounted by pinnacles, lancet windows with hood moulds, and a small spire, which was added to the church tower in the 1920s. The side and front windows of the church have intersecting tracery, and there are decorative buttresses between the windows on the side elevations. The interior features a decorative timber ceiling. The 1883 Sunday school abuts the rear of the church. It is a two-storey face brick building with arched double-hung sash windows and a corrugated-iron clad roof. The lower floor is divided into small rooms for Sunday school classes, and the church hall is above this. The site is enclosed by a cyclone fence, with decorative timber gateposts on the Ford Street corner. In front of the church is a specimen of Grey Myrtle (*Backhousia myrtifolia*), an Australian native rarely found in cultivation.

### How is it significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Why is it significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

St Andrew's Uniting Church is historically significant as a reflection of the rapid development which occurred in country Victoria following the discovery of gold in the early 1850s. The church was one of the earliest permanent buildings on the Ovens goldfields, and reflects the strength and wealth of the local Presbyterian congregation at the time. The Sunday school at the rear is significant as a reflection of the importance of the religious instruction of children in the nineteenth century. St Andrew's is historically significant for its long-term association with the local population of Chinese miners. [Criterion A]

St Andrew's Uniting Church is architecturally significant as a fine example of a church building of the early gold rush period. It demonstrates the simple form of such 1850s buildings, when a large number of churches were being built and economy was a major concern. Churches were as simple as possible, with a rectangular plan, a minimal chancel, no transept and little decoration. St Andrew's Church adopted these typical features of a simple church of the early Victorian period. [Criterion D]

St Andrew's Uniting Church is also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

St Andrew's Uniting Church is significant for its association with the early history of Beechworth. It is one of the oldest buildings in Beechworth, and its simple form and decoration are typical of the town's early buildings. It is a prominent landmark in the Beechworth streetscape. It is associated with several eminent nineteenth century Presbyterians, including Rev J K McMillan who in 1878 became Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of Victoria, and later John Gordon Mackie, a learned scholar who was considered to be one of the most outstanding figures in the nineteenth century church.

## 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:

#### PERMIT EXEMPTIONS

It should be noted that Permit Exemptions can be granted at the time of registration (under s.42(4) of the Heritage Act). Permit Exemptions can also be applied for and granted after registration (under s.66 of the Heritage Act)

**General Condition: 1.**

All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object.

**General Condition: 2.**

Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible.

**General Condition: 3.**

All works should be informed by Conservation Management Plans prepared for the place. The Executive Director is not bound by any Conservation Management Plan, and permits still must be obtained for works suggested in any Conservation Management Plan.

**General Conditions: 4.**

Nothing in this determination prevents the Heritage Council from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

**General Condition: 5.**

Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the relevant responsible authority, where applicable.

**Specific Permit Exemptions**

Works that do not increase the floor area of that part of the modern manse (to the east of the church) which lies on registered land are permit exempt.

**Exterior works:**

- . Removal of extraneous items such as air conditioners, pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae, aerials etc, and making good.
- . Installation and repairing of damp proofing by either injection method or grout pocket method.
- . Installation or removal of external fixtures and fittings such as, hot water services and taps.

**Interior works:**

- . Painting of previously painted walls and ceilings provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of any original paint or other decorative scheme.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of curtain tracks, rods and blinds.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted art or religious works or icons.
- . Demolition or removal of non-original stud/partition walls, suspended ceilings or non-original wall linings (including plasterboard, laminate and Masonite), bathroom partitions and tiling, sanitary fixtures and fittings, kitchen wall tiling and equipment, lights, built-in cupboards, cubicle partitions, computer and office fitout and the like.
- . Removal or replacement of non-original door and window furniture including, hinges, locks, knobsets and sash lifts.
- . Installation of stud walls, which are removable.
- . Refurbishment of existing bathrooms, toilets and kitchens including removal, installation or replacement of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, mirrors, wall and floor coverings.
- . Removal of tiling or concrete slabs in wet areas provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

- . Installation, removal or replacement of ducted, hydronic or concealed radiant type heating provided that the installation does not damage existing skirtings and architraves and that the central plant is concealed.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of electrical wiring providing that all new wiring is fully concealed and does not involve the alteration or removal of any original fabric.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of electric clocks, public address systems, detectors, alarms, emergency lights, exit signs, luminaires and the like on plaster surfaces.
- . Installation, removal or replacement of bulk insulation in the roof space.
- . Installation of plant within the roof space.
- . Installation of new fire hydrant services including sprinklers, fire doors and elements affixed to plaster surfaces.

#### Landscape Exemptions:

- . The process of gardening, including mowing, hedge clipping, bedding displays, removal of dead shrubs and replanting the same species or cultivar, disease and weed control, and maintenance to care for existing plants
- . The removal or pruning of dead or dangerous trees to maintain safety. If the tree is identified as being of primary or contributory cultural heritage significance, the Executive Director must be notified of these works within 21 days of them being undertaken.
- . Replanting of removed or dead trees and vegetation with the same plant species to conserve the significant landscape character and values.
- . Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996
- . Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standard; Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009.
- . Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with .AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits
- . Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*
- . Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

## Theme

6. Building towns cities and the garden state 8. Building community life

Construction dates 1857, 1883,  
 Heritage Act Categories Registered place,  
 Other Names ST ANDREW'S,  
 Hermes Number 117  
 Property Number

## History

Contextual history

Beechworth owes its existence to the discovery of gold in 1852. The Beechworth area was first settled by squatters from 1837, but the discovery of gold resulted in a rush of miners to the area. The Ovens was an important river system in north-east Victoria and gave its name to the goldfields in this area. The town developed around the Gold Commissioner's Camp, established in 1852 on the granite hill on the north bank of Spring Creek. The township was first known as Mayday Hills, but when surveyed in 1853, it was named Beechworth. The main overland route between Melbourne and Sydney passed through the town until the 1870s (when the railway was built further to the west), and until then Beechworth was one of the richest towns in Victoria and the financial and administrative centre of the north-east .

Until the mid-1850s most buildings in the town were constructed of wood, bark or canvas, but following the election of a town council in 1856 building regulations were introduced. Many of the town's major buildings were erected during the following five years, including the Ovens District Hospital (1856, VHR H358) and the Burke Museum (VHR H345, begun in 1857 by the Young Men's Association as a hall and library). The first town hall was built in 1859. By the early 1860s a group of important administrative buildings, known as the Beechworth Justice Precinct (VHR H1464), had been completed on Ford Street, and a large gaol (VHR H1549) was begun to the north of this in 1858. The Beechworth Lunatic Asylum, later the Mayday Hills Hospital (VHR H1864-67), was built in 1864-67, and the landmark post office (VHR H867) was completed in 1870.

The Ovens gold rushes peaked in 1857, and during the following two decades the population of Beechworth decreased (though the last mining company in the district only closed in 1956). Despite the decline in the gold industry, the town was sustained well into the twentieth century by the presence of the government institutions founded in the 1850s and 1860s, especially the asylum and the gaol.

The first church services in the Beechworth area were held in tents, private homes and any other available building. The first church buildings were usually of timber and were replaced by stone or brick buildings as soon as funds allowed. The first churches in Victoria were overwhelmingly inspired by English models and until the late nineteenth century most were in a Gothic Revival style, characterised particularly by the use of the pointed arch.

Tourism has now become a major industry in Beechworth. Tourism began in the 1880s with the town's reputation as a health resort and picturesque beauty spot. The declining prosperity of the town had the advantage that the post-World War II development that led to the destruction of so much of Victoria's nineteenth century fabric during the 1950s-70s was minimised. At this time there was an increasing awareness of the importance of Victoria's early history and heritage. In the 1960s the National Trust was active in classifying Beechworth's early buildings, and efforts began to restore buildings which had fallen into disrepair. The retention of much of the town's historic character has now made it a popular tourist destination.

#### Place history

Presbyterian services were held on the Ovens diggings as early as 1852-53 by a minister appointed by the Presbytery of Melbourne. After this time the diggers were attended to intermittently by a minister travelling from Albury. In May 1856, at the request of some of the many Presbyterians from Scotland and Northern Ireland on the local diggings, the Rev James Nish of Sandhurst (now Bendigo) was deputed to visit Beechworth and establish a Presbyterian congregation. Rev Nish held services in the Anglican and Methodist schoolrooms and on the diggings, and established the nucleus of a congregation before returning to Sandhurst. He came back to Beechworth in February 1857, when the decision was made to appoint a permanent minister and to erect a church building.

The first minister, Rev John Grant, arrived in April 1857. The government granted a reserve for church buildings and Rev Nish laid the foundation stone for a new church building on 6 July 1857. In a cavity beneath the foundation stone was placed a box containing coins, copies of current newspapers, and a scroll, which noted that

The foundation stone of the Presbyterian Church was laid by the Rev. James Nish, of Sandhurst, on 6th July 1857, and in the 20th year of the reign of our beloved Sovereign, Queen Victoria, Sir Henry Barkly, K. C. B. being the Governor of the Colony. The dimensions of the building are 65 x 37 ft and seated to hold 400 persons. The building is to be erected at a cost of £2500. The site of the Church is the gift of the Government. The Rev. John Grant, officiating clergyman; Thomas Turnbull, architect; Smith Bank and Cranston, builders; John Dorman, Thomas Dalziel, J. K. Brown, Alexander Rodgers, Robert Craig, trustees; Wm. Turner, hon. Secretary; John Sitch Clark, hon. Treasurer.

The building was opened on 25 February 1858. The style and form were of a type adopted in England in the early nineteenth century, when a large number of churches were being built in the new industrial areas and economy

was a major concern. Churches were as simple as possible, with a rectangular plan, a minimal chancel, no transept and little decoration. St Andrew's Church adopted these typical features of a simple English church of the early Victorian period.

The Rev J K McMillan became minister in 1859. He was described as an impressive man, who preached three or four times on Sundays, usually at three different places, and held regular services for Protestant prisoners at Beechworth Gaol. During his time at Beechworth he erected a manse (now demolished) and cleared a heavy building debt. He is credited with founding the congregations at Bright, Benalla, Chiltern, Mansfield, Wangaratta and Yackandandah. He left Beechworth in 1869 and in 1878 became Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly of Victoria.

In 1868 McMillan was succeeded by Rev George Graham, who remained until December 1874. Then followed Rev R K Ewing, and later Rev John Gordon Mackie, a learned scholar who was considered to be one of the most outstanding figures in the nineteenth century church in Victoria.

A Sunday School had been held regularly in the church building since 1857. In 1858, 66 children were in attendance and by 1869 there were 177 on the roll. The foundation stone for a new Sunday school building adjoining the rear of the church was laid by Rev Mackie on 21 March 1883, with the building completed in July of that year. It was on two levels, with several rooms for the Sunday school on the lower level and a small hall above.

The 1880s saw a decline in gold production and in the population of Beechworth. The church congregation fell and with it the minister's income. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it became difficult to attract ministers to the area and the position was often vacant. Despite this, generous bequests allowed repairs to the deteriorating building and the construction of the steeple in the 1920s. The old gas lights which had been used since 1882 were replaced by electric lights in 1931. With the 1930s depression the church was again without a minister from 1932-37.

The church became a Uniting Church after 1977, following the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches in Australia.

### The Chinese Mission

The Beechworth area was said in the 1850s to have had the largest Chinese population in Victoria outside Melbourne, and 7,000 were working on the local goldfields by the early 1860s. They often worked claims abandoned by others, and also established market gardens and tobacco farms. From 1859 Rev McMillan was concerned about 'evangelising the immense Chinese population'. A collection was taken to establish a fund for providing religious instruction to the Chinese, but missionary work was spasmodic until 1868 when the Presbyterian Assembly established a mission in Beechworth. A trained Chinese catechist, Mr George Ah Liu, was employed to teach the faith on a salary of £125 a year. The Chinese mission however was not well funded and relied on the generosity of the congregation. A Chinese seminary opened in Melbourne in 1875 and one of the first four graduates, Mr John Ah Wai, was sent to Beechworth in 1876, and a Chinese chapel was opened on Old Stanley Road in 1880.

Despite a decline in the Chinese population after the 1880s, the mission continued to employ Chinese catechists. James Quong Cheong was catechist for ten years from 1892, during which time he prepared 33 Chinese for Baptism. By 1916 the Chinese population of north-east Victoria was only 116, and of these 60 attended Presbyterian services. The missionary work at Beechworth continued for another 20 years, until 1936.

### KEY REFERENCES USED TO PREPARE ASSESSMENT

Roy C Harvey, *Background to Beechworth From 1852*, Beechworth 1978.

Miles Lewis (ed), *Victorian Churches*, Melbourne 1991.

John Stanley Martin, *One hundred years on: Beechworth Presbyterian Church: A saga of St Andrew's Beechworth*, Beechworth 1957.

Carole Woods, *Beechworth A Titan's Field*, Beechworth 1985.

### Plaque Citation



This Gothic Revival style church was designed by the architect Thomas Turnbull and built in 1857-58. The two-storey brick Sunday School and hall at the rear were added in 1883. It is typical of the small country churches of the gold rush period.

## Assessment Against Criteria

### Criterion

St Andrew's Uniting Church is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Why is it significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

St Andrew's Uniting Church is historically significant as a reflection of the rapid development which occurred in country Victoria following the discovery of gold in the early 1850s. The church was one of the earliest permanent buildings on the Ovens goldfields, and reflects the strength and wealth of the local Presbyterian congregation at the time. The Sunday school at the rear is significant as a reflection of the importance of the religious instruction of children in the nineteenth century. St Andrew's is historically significant for its long-term association with the local population of Chinese miners. [

### Criterion A]

St Andrew's Uniting Church is architecturally significant as a fine example of a church building of the early gold rush period. It demonstrates the simple form of such 1850s buildings, when a large number of churches were being built and economy was a major concern. Churches were as simple as possible, with a rectangular plan, a minimal chancel, no transept and little decoration. St Andrew's Church adopted these typical features of a simple church of the early Victorian period. [

### Criterion D]

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying Heritage Register Number H347 in the category described as Heritage Place.

St Andrews Uniting Church  
115 Ford Street  
Beechworth  
Indigo Shire

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 347 encompassing part of Lot 4 on Lodged Plan 56645.

Dated 9 April 2015

TIM SMITH  
Executive Director

[*Victoria Government Gazette* No G14 9 April 2015 p.756]

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*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/>*