
FORMER ST FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC CHURCH



St Francis Xavier Catholic Church



former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, north elevation



former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, east elevation with red brick addition



former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, east elevation from the Loddon Valley Highway

Location

10 MULVHAIL ROAD, WOODVALE - PROPERTY NUMBER 197958, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO838

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 12, 2023

What is significant?

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, south of Campbell's Forest, is a Gothic-influenced timber church that incorporates 'bungalow' and Arts and Crafts touches. Since the cessation of services at the church in 1971, the building has been adapted to a private residence, a process that has resulted in extensive alterations. The church was built in 1935, replacing an earlier place of worship on the same site. The previous church dated to 1873. St Francis Xavier's is one of the more substantial historic properties remaining in the settlement of Campbell's Forest and provides evidence of the settlement's early twentieth century heyday. The property also demonstrates the religious life of the Catholic community in the area, which formed a large and active congregation from the 1870s until its gradual decline from the late 1940s.

How is it significant?

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church built in 1935, is of local historical significance.

Why is it significant?

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church is of local historical significance (Criterion A) for its capacity to recall the religious life of the Catholic community in the area. The church had a large and active congregation until the late 1940s, a legacy of the presence in the district of the early Irish Catholic pioneers and their descendants. The site, south of Campbell's Forest, was selected as the location of the Catholic place of worship as early as 1873. The present church was built in 1935, replacing the original structure. St Francis Xavier's is also one of the more substantial historic properties remaining in the settlement of Campbell's Forest and provides evidence of the settlement's early twentieth century heyday. The former church, in its original form, was a well executed timber building in the vernacular Gothic mode, which successfully incorporated 'bungalow' and Arts and Crafts touches. However, the modifications to the building, to adapt it to residential use, have impacted on its original form, and also on some of the original detailing. While it is recognised that the church is one of the few surviving timber churches in the City of Greater Bendigo (Criterion B), the degree of alteration has detracted from the aesthetic significance of the building.

Theme

8. Building community life

Heritage Study/Consultant	Greater Bendigo - Heritage Policy Citations Review, Lovell Chen P/L, 2011;
Construction dates	1929,
Architect/Designer	Austen, George,
Hermes Number	184709
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

(The following description is limited due to the restricted visibility of the building from the main road frontage, including restricted views of the side elevations, and of the rear.)

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, built in 1935, is a vernacular Gothic-influenced timber church with 'bungalow' and Arts and Crafts touches. It is located on a large allotment to the east of the Loddon Valley Highway. The original building is essentially T shaped in plan with a small gable ended porch to the front (north) and projecting transepts (or porches) at the south. Although adapted to residential use, the church retains its original nave and side and front porches.

The aerial photograph included above indicates that additions have been added to both the east and west sides of the building, apparently enveloping (or partly enveloping) the original building elevations. The west addition(s) is not visible from the street, and views of the east addition are also limited, but some description is included below.

The walls of the church are clad with bull nosed weatherboards and asbestos cement sheeting. The weatherboards are generally painted white, with the asbestos sheeting painted green. The timber framed windows are lancet-arched. It is possible that the original side walls associated with the east and west additions have been partially removed/penetrated to open up to the additions.

A triangular window with six lights in a radial arrangement around a central glazed bullseye is located to the north gable end, over the front porch. The glazed bullseye features the lettering 'HIS' (1) in leadlight work; the leadlight to the six surrounding lights have simple diamond patterns.

The works to the east include a brick structure (wall) which begins at the front porch and continues along the east elevation. It may incorporate an enclosed outdoor space. The transept at the east end also appears to have been clad (or reconstructed) in brick. To the east side of the front porch and awning has been added, with a plain fascia; this cuts across the lancet window so that the top light reads as a curved triangle above the awning, and as a simple double-hung sash below.

The ridge-mounted crosses, evident in the historic image above, have been removed. The origins of the church are remembered in a sign fixed to a timber board facing Mulvahil Road reading 'St Francis Xavier Catholic Church'.

(1) 'HIS' (*Iesus Hominum Salvator*) is a monogram used by the Roman Catholic Church, meaning 'Jesus, saviour of man'. Catholic Encyclopaedia online, www.newadvent.org

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/>