ST AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH, REMNANT CONVENT, ENTRY ARCH, BELL and GROTTO

ADDRESS: 55 High Street, Wodonga

STUDY NUMBER: 2C HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

DATE: St Augustine's Church: 1874-76 (nave) and 1902 (other sections)

St Joseph's Convent, remnant: 1893

Grotto: circa 1930

CONDITION: St Augustine's Church – good

St Joseph's Convent - good

INTEGRITY: St Augustine's Church – good

St Joseph's Convent -fair (only part survives)



Church, north elevation (Biosis, March 2022)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is significant?

St Augustine's Church, remnant part of St Joseph's Convent, entry arch, bell (and associated plaque), and Grotto at 55 High Street, Wodonga are significant.

The land was reserved for the Catholic Church in 1857. The extant masonry church was built in two phases - the nave during the mid-1870s (unknown designer) and the other gabled sections (altar, sacristy, east and north porches, and nuns chapel) in 1902 to the design of Clegg, Kell and Miller. The white marble altar and tabernacle were installed in 1918. The significant elements of

the church are the gable form, roof clad in corrugated sheet metal, English bond brickwork, buttressing, pointed arched windows with label mouldings, decorative glass windows, and internally the white marble altar and tabernacle, and timber ceiling/exposed roof elements.

The remnant/rear part of the former St Joseph's Convent, built in 1893 to the design of Gordon & Gordon, being the roof form and north elevation with tuckpointed Flemish bond brickwork, pointed arched windows, and recessed timber entry.

The circa 1930 Grotto including its form, pyramidal roof, face brickwork including crenulated parapet, statue, and pink tiling to the deck. The panelled entry arch also likely dates to the interwar period.

The bell and the associated original plaque but not the extant tower structure.

All other elements are not significant.

How is it significant?

St Augustine's Church, remnant part of St Joseph's Convent, bell, and Grotto at 55 High Street, Wodonga is of historical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Wodonga.

Why is it significant?

St Augustine's Church, remnant part of St Joseph's Convent, bell, and Grotto are of historical significance the attest to the occupation of the site by the Catholic community since the mid-1870s, that is over 150 years, for both religious services and education, although there were earlier buildings since demolished. The church nave is the earliest religious building fabric to survive in the municipality and other surviving sections (remnant convent, church additions, bell and grotto) reflect key development phases at the site and have associations with noted architects - Gordon & Gordon and Clegg, Kell and Miller. (Criterion A)

The site is of aesthetic significance for the intact (sections of) distinctive buildings and structures dating to late 19th to early 20th century.

- St Augustine's church is the finest example of the Gothic style in the municipality and is notable for its decorative windows, elaborate marble altar and timber lined ceilings,
- Whilst only part of St Joseph's convent survives, its north elevation is noteworthy example for its detailing.
- The Grotto is a unique structure and distinguished by its pyramidal roof and crenulated parapet.
- The entry arch is similarly an unusual element and evocative of the interwar period in its detailing. (Criterion E)

The site is of social significance providing tangible evidence of the Catholic church and education system within Wodonga and its continued use for both and importance within the community. (Criterion G)

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

St Augustine's Catholic Church is located within the grounds of St Augustine's Primary School bounded by High (east), Osburn (north) and Church (west) streets.

The significant elements are the church, remnant sections of St Joseph's Convent, and the grotto.

The Church

The red brick, Gothic style church was built in two key stages – original nave (1874-76) and additions – porch, sanctuary, etc. (1902). The steeply pitched gable roof is clad with corrugated sheet metal. There is a chimney to the north-east corner (sacristy).

The walls have a rendered plinth and are laid in English bond (alternating rows of headers and stretchers). Stepped buttress with rendered amortizements (sloping face) divide the nave into five bays and are also employed at the corners of the other sections (chapels, porch, etc.). Other rendered elements include the copings to the gable ends and the label mouldings over the pointed arched windows. Most of the gable ends are surmounted by a cross.

There are entrance porches to the east (High Street) and north (Osburn Street) with paired timber doors and tessellated floor tiles. Other early volumes/projections relate to the sanctuary/altar (west) and sacristy (north) and nun's chapel (south) which has its own entrance. Later, unrelated sections which adjoin the church include a toilet block at the southwest corner and a double garage to the south-east.

The pointed arch windows feature stained glass, often in margin lights. To the nave are various saints depicted and behind the altar is a tri-partite window featuring the Crucifixion.

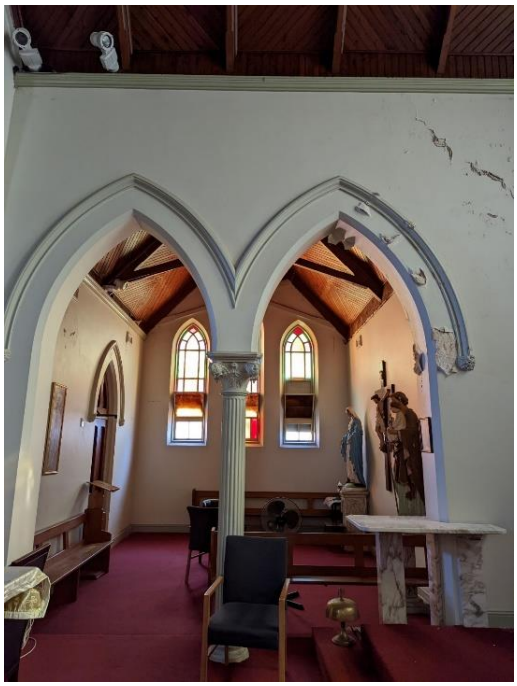
The nun's chapel is connected to the nave by way of a double archway with a central Corinthian column with a fluted shaft. There is a choir stall to the east end and an elaborate, white marble altar and tabernacle to the west end. Internally the rendered masonry walls are painted and the ceilings are timber lined, in a chevron pattern to the nave with partly exposed truss and ventilating registers.



Church, looking west to the altar (Biosis, March 2022)



Marble altar and tabernacle (Biosis, March 2022)



Nuns chapel (Biosis, March 2022)

Entry Arch and Bell

The entry arch is a rendered and painted structure. It has panelled piers with corbelled caps surmounted by crosses with a connecting broad pointed arch which has a central semi-circular pediment.



Front of church, rear of grotto (dashed), entry arch, and bell tower (arrow) (Biosis, March 2022)

A church bell dating to 1918 has been installed on a small non-original tower (campanile) with a brick base and steel frame near the entrance on High Street. There is s stone plaque inscribed as follows: GIFT OF MR M. T. TOOHEY-1918-F. FLYNN PASTOR.

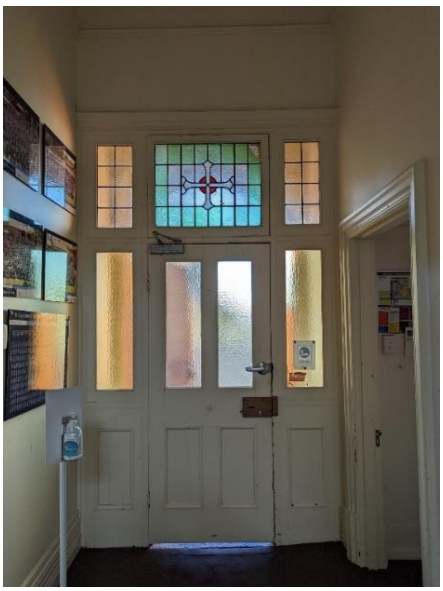
St Josephs Convent

The rear part of St Josephs convent/school survives to the west of the church. The hip roof, clad in corrugated sheet metal, consists of various sections with three original chimneys with projecting rendered caps punctuating the ridges.

The main visible section is the north wall which features tuckpointed red brick in Flemish bond with lighter bricks to the arches (which may have been painted cream originally) and a band at their springing. There is a semicircular opening for a recessed porch with panelled timber entry comprised of a central door and sidelights. The upper part of the door and sidelights have textured/translucent glass and the highlights feature leadlight quarrels with a central cross motif set in a field of stained glass. Other openings have pointed brick arches with double hung sashes below a toplight.



Former convent, north elevation with pointed arches (Biosis, March 2022)

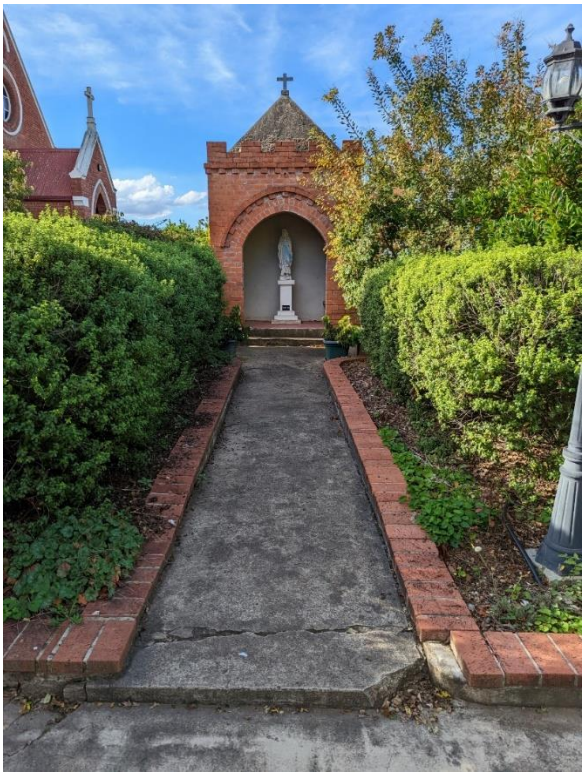


Entry with leadlight quarrels

The Grotto

The Grotto is located on a side axis of the garden area to the south-west of the church. Grottos were popularised in the Catholic church and relate to the apparitions of Mary that occurred at Lourdes [southern France] in 1858.

The small red brick structure accommodates a statue of Mary and has square footprint and a rendered, pyramidal roof surmounted by a cross. The base is concrete and the parapet is crenelated with a projecting course and projecting headers. The bond is generally stretcher with headers to the arch (voussoirs). The pink tiles to the internal deck likely date to the early 20th century and the ceiling is lined with timber boards in a diamond configuration.



Grotto, from south (Biosis, March 2022)



Grotto, north elevation (Biosis, March 2022)

Other Buildings and Elements

The other buildings are of varying age. The earlier surviving school building in the north-west corner date to the interwar period, 1920s and 1930s, but have undergone considerable modification such that their integrity is limited.

The sections from the late 20th/early 21st centuries – mainly those to the west side (Church Street) and to the south of the church, where the front/main part of Josephs convent had been located. The later, whilst it replicates the general façade configuration is larger and sits forward of the former convent building. Similarly, the front garden has been truncated and altered.

The masonry fencing is also not original replacing earlier timber fences and the like.

HISTORIC THEMES

8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

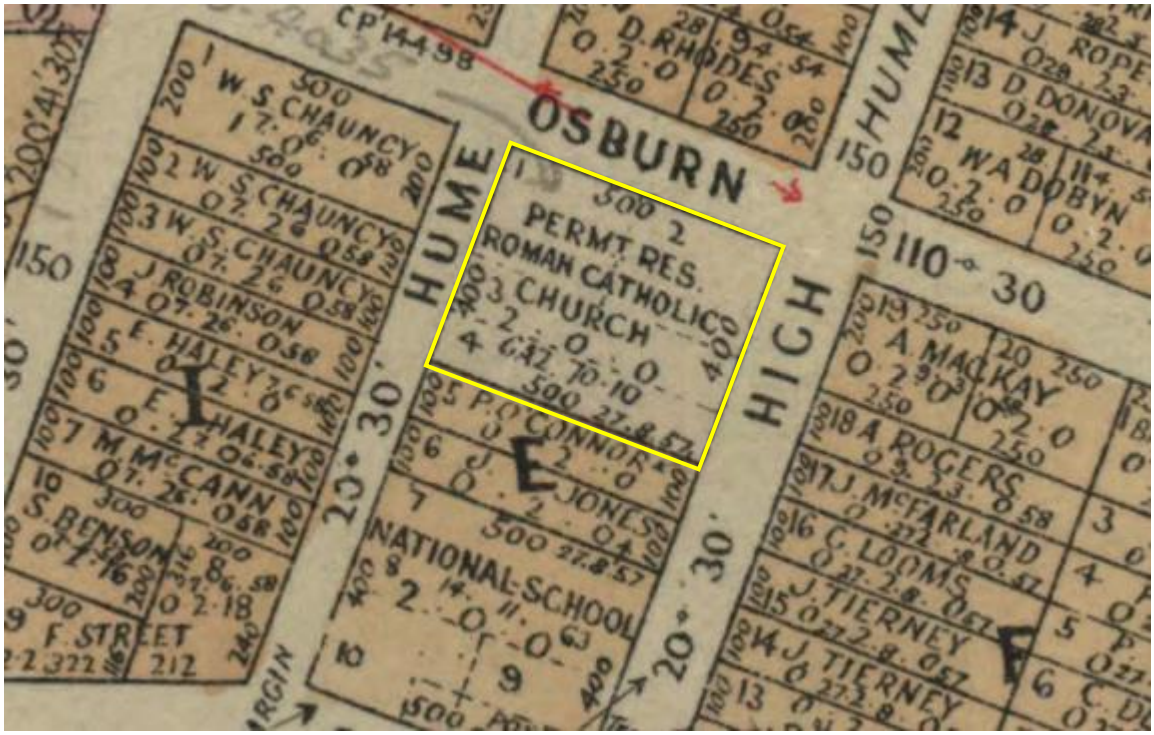
8.2 Educating people

8.6 Marking the phases of life

HISTORY

Early links to the Catholic Church within Wodonga is attributed to Father Charles Lovat who arrived from Yass in November 1843 and provided mass in the Huon family home, Belvoir (former name of Wodonga) on the elevated site where Cambourne now stands.

In August 1857 land within the township was permanently reserved for the Roman Catholic Church on Crown Allotment 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Section E (Wodonga Parish Plan 1877).



Wodonga Parish Plan with subject site highlighted (Wodonga Parish Plan 1877)

On 4 October 1860, Bishop Goold visited Wodonga and consecrated St Francis Chapel, which was erected on the site of the present St Augustine's Church. Bishop Goold noted in his diary 'St. Francis Chapel dedicated today, Wodonga. Celebrated Mass at 10am. The Catholic population here is small. School building good. Weatherboard situation' (*A Condensed History of St Augustine's).*

By mid-1874 , the original building was found to be wanting and work on the nave or core of the extant brick building was underway as follows:

> A commencement has been made with the erection of a new Catholic Church at Wodonga. Within the last few days (says the Times) workmen have been engaged in laying the foundation of the new edifice, which is to be of brick, of rather modest dimensions, but the plans are so drawn that it may be enlarged from time to time. The completion of this building c will supply a want long felt in Wodonga, as, although there is a spacious church in Albury, the distance to be traversed is too great to allow of ladies and children regularly attending service. The wooden structure that has hitherto done duty in Wodonga, however suitable in years past, is not adapted to the requirements of the present population, whilst there is a probability, as soon as adequate accommodation is provided, of a clergyman being stationed in the neighbourhood (OMA).

Whilst the designer of the original nave it is not known, the first section was opened two years later in June 1876 in the growing township.

> Thus the spacious and noble edifices erected in Albury for the worship of God have tended, if not to prevent church erection in Wodonga, to cause it to be less zealously undertaken than if there had been no "places in which prayer might be made" within reach of the residents of the border. Wodonga has for some time emerged from what may termed the chrysalis state, but the Catholic residents —

> a tolerably strong body — have been content to use for worship a structure erected when it was only a township in name, and it is only within the last few days that an edifice more suited to their requirements, has been partially completed (OMA).

A description from 1879 confirms the extent of fabric from the original phase of construction during the mid-1870s being only the extant nave with an earlier porch.

> The structure is of brick, having five gothic windows on each side. Over the entrance porch is a circular light. The interior, although unpretentious, is neat, and in every way appropriate. The roof is lined with deal, stained and varnished (OMA).

A one room timber school was built in 1876 and staffed by two lay teachers - lay Miss Fagan and Miss O'Leary – who managed the school until the arrival of the Mercy Sisters in 1892 (*A Condensed History of St Augustine's)*. The Sisters of Mercy was a Catholic religious order of nuns originating in Ireland in 1824. The Sisters of Mercy travelled from Ireland to Goldbourn where news of their support for the poor and young stretched south across the border to Albury. The community of Albury requested the support and services of the Sisters' and by mid-1869, following a long journey, the first Order of Sisters arrived in the town. By 1 February 1870 with the help of the Albury Presbyterian Church, the Convent in Albury was built to accommodate the Sisters (Garland 2018).

During the 1890s, the renowned local architects Gordon and Gordon were commissioned to undertake two projects: St Joseph's Convent (of which the rear part survives) and a/the gallery to the church.

In February 1893, Gordon and Gordon sought tenders for the brick convent building (W and T S, 3 February). The Convent, located to the south of the church, was designed for the education and board of female children. In its first year, the school commenced with 40 pupils and by the following year the student count increased to 140. Over the years, subjects ranged from the theory of music, practical music, history, geography, arithmetic, geometry, fancy and plain needle work. By the 20-century the Convent was hosting their space for the examinations for external business schools ('St. Joseph's Convent, Wodonga', 1897, 'St. Joseph's Convent School, Wodonga.', 1899).

In March 1893, the foundation stone for St Joseph's convent was laid and an update of the building program was provided in the local newspaper as follows:

> The building, the erection of which has been entrusted to Messrs Fraser and Wilson, of Melbourne, will cost altogether about £1000, and when completed will be a highly ornate brick structure. The contractors expect to hand the building over within three months. In the front is a handsome verandah, with an oratory on the right and a community room on the left (W and TS).

The convent was opened in mid-August (W and TS, 18 August).

In April 1899, the first masonry school building at the site was opened, in the north-west corner, to the design of the architects Clegg, Kell and Miller (W and T S). This building, depicted below, replaced the convent as the principal school building but has since been demolished. Note that the boundary fence was timber at this time.

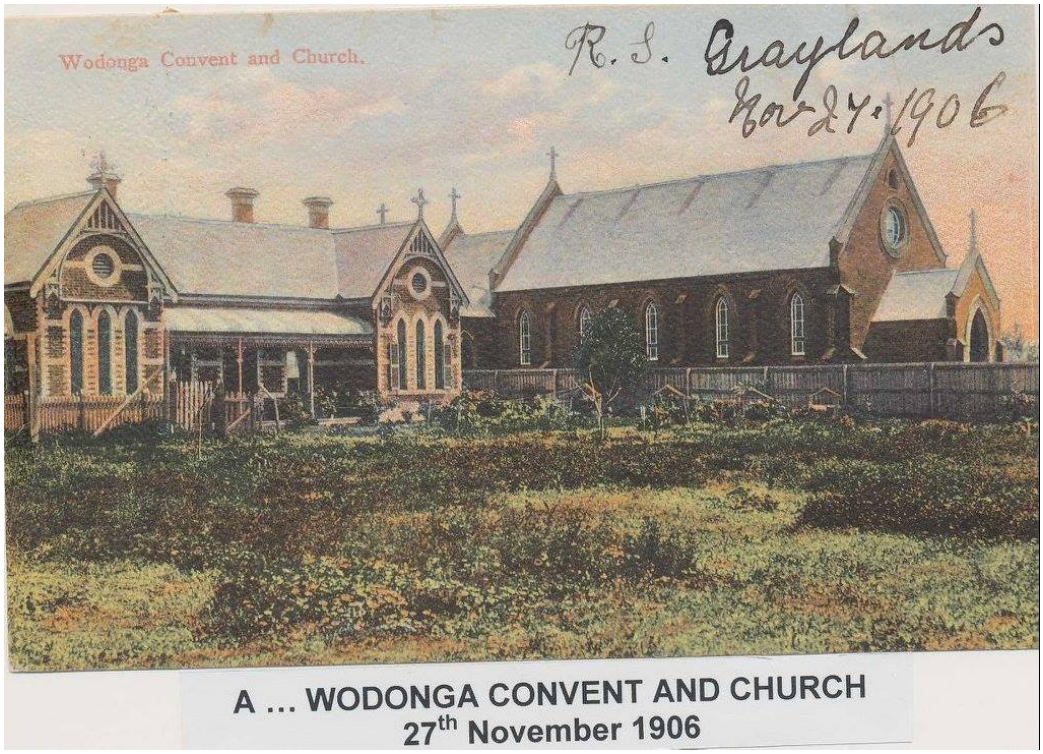


Circa 1900, west end/rear of church soon after the additions were undertaken (left) and original school building right (*Wodonga Yesterday*, figure 104)

In 1902, extensive additions to the church were undertaken, also by Clegg, Kell and Miller. The contractors were Stubbs and Gray at a cost of £1400. The additions included all the extant spaces attached to the nave being the altar (west) and attached sacristy (north), north side entry, nuns chapel (south), and extant front porch (east). The following article provides extensive details about the project including the materials employed.

> For a considerable time past the accommodation at St. Augustine's Church, Wodonga, has been insufficient for the steadily increasing congregation, and an enlargement of the sacred edifice, which was built about a quarter of a century back, became an absolute necessity. No sooner had Father Ryan been placed in charge of the newly created parish of Wodonga two years ago than he decided to make the additions with as little delay as possible. Plans and specifications were accordingly prepared, the architects being Messrs Clegg, Kell and Miller, of Maryborough. Tenders having been invited for the work, the tender of Messrs Stubbs and Gray, of Melbourne was accepted, the amount of the contract being £1190, while other important improvements will bring up the total cost to £1400.
>
> One of the most striking features is the new porch, or main entrance approaching the nave. The porch is spacious and elaborately finished with tiled floors in black and white marble, and ornamental fonts and niches in the wall. Dividing the porch from the nave is a large doorway, with folding doors fixed on spring hinges and covered in green baize, panelled off with polished cedar mouldings, and mounted with brass furniture.
>
> On entering is the spacious nave which from the original has been extended 24 feet, and terminated with a very wide, high, and massive arch, heavily moulded and richly finished. Immediately from and under this arch is entered the sanctuary, with floor elevated from nave: while the whole space is filled in from pier to pier at arch with very prettily designed turned cedar polished. The altar

railing is placed from piers to pillar, which is of heavy cast-iron, with heavy, moulded baize on foliated cap, supporting two Gothic arches of bold design, sub-dividing the sanctuary from nun's chapel, which is situated at the south side, and having on the north side a sacristy of similar size, and entered from sanctuary by a doorway, corresponding in every particular to that of the main and side entrances, the latter of which is centrally situated, off the nave, on the north side. The foundations are of Alkemade's hydraulic Comadai lime, with the structure of brick, supported by huge buttresses, and neatly relieved throughout externally with cement dressings colored to imitate freestone, while the gables throughout are surmounted with heavily moulded copings and richly chased crosses. The floors of nave, sanctuary, nun's chapel, and sacristy are of Murray pine; the ceiling of nave is of red deal varnished, and carried out to harmonise with original. The ceiling over the sanctuary is of Murray pine, finished off in panels, with boards fixed diagonally, and a neatly finished with mouldings, while remaining ceilings, over porches, sanctuary, and sacristy, are of similar woods, but finished in plainer, varying styles, and presentation of the whole a nice appearance. The walls internally are set in plaster of Paris, with splayed reveals continued round door and window openings, relieved with bold moulded archivolts and richly modelled bosses. Too much cannot be said for the satisfactory manner in which the whole of the plastering has been executed by Mr E. Hodgson, of Rutherglen (W + TS).



Photograph of St Augustine's with St Joseph's Convent in the foreground showing the relationship of the two buildings, with the convent being set back further than the extant replacement (Graylands, 1906, Wodonga Historical Society). Note the timber fence

In early November 1918, it was reported that a white marble altar would soon be installed in the church:

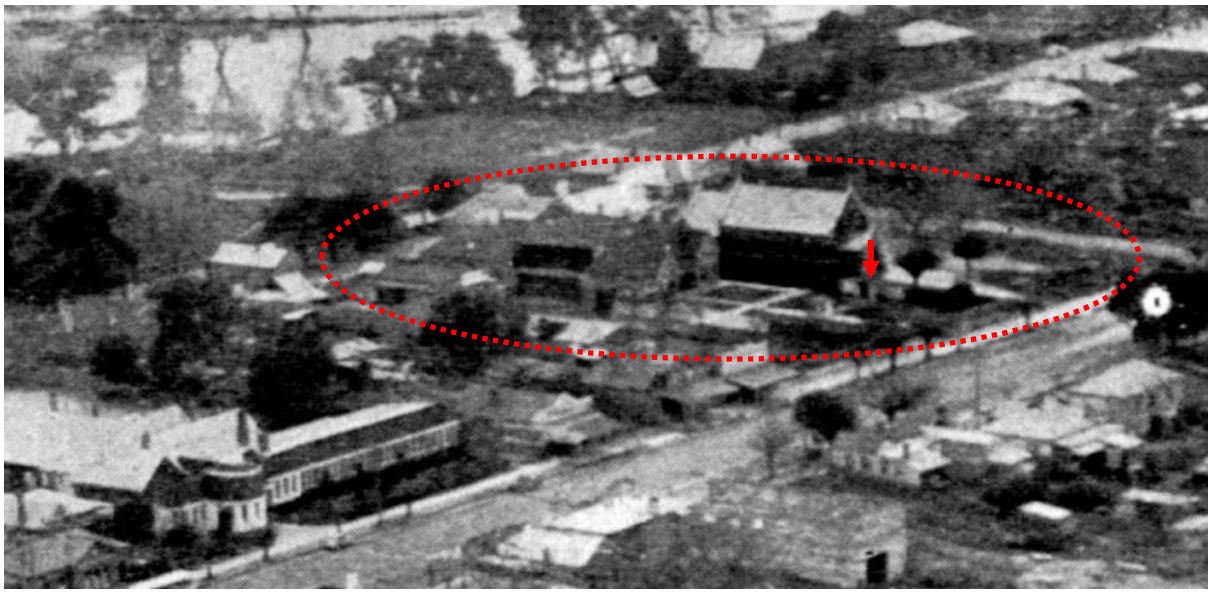
> Dr. Flynn [priest] has received word from the firm in Melbourne who are making a new marble altar to his order for St. Augustine's that they expect to have it completed and erected before Christmas.

In 1927 major refurbishments were completed during which time St. Augustine's provided education up to Intermediate Certificate level (*A Condensed History of St Augustine's).*



St Joseph's Convent, during the early to mid-20th century (1920s-1954, Rose Series, Facebook) Note an earlier bell stand is evident to the right of the convent

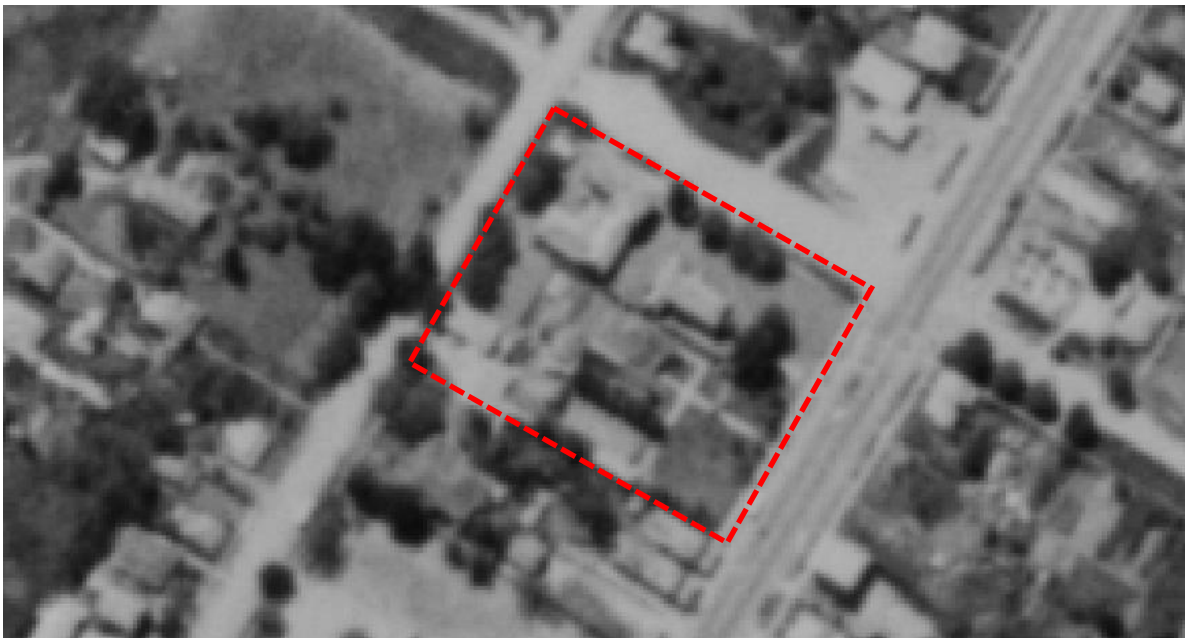
The following aerial for 1951 captures the contemporary extent of development at the site. The grotto had been built by that time and two established trees framed the east entry to the church.



1951 aerial with the site highlighted ('A Section of Wodonga from the Air,' Wodonga 1951, SLV p17). The grotto is evident (arrow)

In 1959 the boarding school function out of St Joseph's Convent was discontinued. In the same year, a proposal to extend the nave forward was approved by the Public Health Department but with the departure of the instigator, Fr Auburn, the impetus for the project was lost (PBF).

The following aerial of 1963 shows that the front part of St Joseph's Convent stood and the interwar period development in the north corner, replacing the original school building. The trees to the front of the church were larger.



1963 aerial with subject site highlighted. (CAD8, Run 2, Frame 269, Geoscience Australia)

In 1971 the school continued as a coeducational primary school however, offered secondary schooling to female students only. In 1976, St Augustine's became a Primary School and a year later secondary school returned to the site for male students in 1977. In 1989, major refurbishments were again undertaken and in 1993 saw the addition of the multi-Purpose Room and the Arts area in 1995. In 2001 St Joseph's Convent area was partly refurbished into new administration offices for the school and a covered area was added to the front entrance at the start of the 2003 school year.

In 2009, the Building Education Revolution program funded the construction of the Performing Arts centre (PAC) and upgrade several rooms in the main building. The PAC comprised of an Art room, multipurpose room/music room and catering facilities. This work also included the redesign of St Joseph's Convent Garden. The works were completed in late 2010 and opened by Father Denis Crameri. In 2012 the upstairs rooms in the main building were refurbished and in 2015 a new Foundation Learning Centre was constructed. (*A Condensed History of St Augustine's*, 2021).

COMPARISON

To date, only two churches have been included on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay: HO33 and HO39. The former dates to the interwar period and the later, whilst also built during the late 19th century, was extensively remodelled during the late 20th century such that it is no longer recognisably from the Victorian period.

HO33 – Former Methodists church, 15-17 Church Street, Wodonga. Constructed in 1936, this red brick building in English bond has a light Gothic influence by way of its pointed arched windows and buttressing. Traditional in form, the gable façade is however surmounted by a low tower-like element (pedestal) with a cross above.

HO39 - Free Serbian Orthodox Church, 54 High Street, Wodonga. Completed in 1891 for the Presbyterian community to a design by local architects, Gordon and Gordon. It was sold in 1964 to the Free Serbian Orthodox Church and subsequently remodelled. The pointed arched windows have been converted to a semi-circular profile and the original face brick walls were rendered and painted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EXTENT OF LISTING

It is recommended that (former) St Augustine's Church, remnant part of St Joseph's Convent, entry arch, bell, and Grotto at 55 High Street, Wodonga are included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Wodonga Planning Scheme with outbuilding controls and limited internal controls.

The extent of the heritage overlay should include the parcels of land (1~E\PP5869, 2~E\PP5869, 3~E\PP5869) on which the aforementioned elements are located as outlined below (identified in yellow).



(Nearmap, 22 June 2024), showing the location of church, remnant part of St Joseph's Convent, Grotto, entry arch and bell tower

PLANNING SCHEME CONTROLS

Planning Controls	Y/N
External Paint Controls Apply?	N
Internal Alteration Controls Apply?	Y – church (altar, timber ceiling/roof elements)
Tree Controls Apply?	N
Solar Energy System Controls?	Y
Outbuildings or Fences Not Exempt Under Clause 43.01-4?	Y – Grottto, entry arch, and bell
Included on the Victorian Heritage Register Under the Heritage Act 2017?	N
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	Y
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	N

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