

HISTORY: John Leahy¹ donated the land for the Hopetoun Cemetery in 1850.² The first Roman Catholic cemetery in the Diocese of Melbourne, the Hopetoun Cemetery saw its first burial, that of ?? Connell in April 1851. The last was that of Honora Shea, who was buried on 23 September 1941.³

Adjoining the cemetery, in 1850, a small brick chapel was erected for the burgeoning Catholic community that lived at Hopetoun. John Leahy donated half the cost of construction, and on 15 October 1851, Bishop Goold dedicated the foundation stone to St Laurence O'Toole.⁴ Accommodating 150 people, the chapel was also used as a non-vested Demoninational schoolhouse, from February 1851. Twelve years later, a new school and church opened in Fisken Street (ref: 164A). The chapel, vacant for several years, was used from 1st July 1869 as the Merrimu Common School No 988. In 1871 the average attendance was only 24 and the school closed on 1st January 1874, and thereafter, the building deteriorated.⁵

The Bacchus Marsh and District Historical Society repaired the post-and-rail fence around the cemetery.⁶

VISUAL DESCRIPTION: An early cemetery, now closed. There are seven old pine trees and about 22 marked graves. Most graves have gravestones and low cast-iron fences, often on dressed bluestone bases. There are fragments of other gravestones.

There is also a ruin of a small masonry building. The bases of walls on three sides and of a porch survive. These are in brick and rubble stone, or brick (three courses, 340mm thick and overall, 6.85x11.25m). There is an open concrete drain leading to a culvert at its north end, on the west boundary. Also a post and rail (one side post and wire) boundary fence all round, and the remnants of other timber fences. (Refer: maps).⁷

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: There are ten churches and another two ruined churches in Bacchus Marsh. These are the ruins of the earliest surviving church and the earliest Catholic church in Bacchus Marsh. This is the earliest cemetery in Bacchus Marsh, and the first Catholic cemetery in the Diocese of Melbourne.

¹ Refer ref: 354

² Osborne, *The Bacchus Story*. p.65.

³ Love, *St Bernard's Church, Bacchus Marsh* p.2.

⁴ Ibid., p.1.

⁵ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p.65; Stewart, *The Early History of Bacchus Marsh Schools*, p.91. L.J. Blake, Ed., *Vision and Realisation. A Centenary History of Education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne 1973, Vol.3, p.52.

It is difficult to imagine that a building 6.2x10.6m internally, which are the dimensions indicated by the present dwarf walls, could accommodate 150 people.

⁶ National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Building File No. 2,854.

⁷ The smaller scale map was traced off an aerial photograph supplied by VicRoads, the larger scale was hand-drawn on site.

SIGNIFICANCE: An early, pre-gold rush Catholic cemetery and chapel established in 1850-51, which closed in 1941, with the ruins of an early Catholic chapel and school, which closed in 1874. The cemetery was the earliest established in the Catholic Diocese of Melbourne. The chapel was the first Catholic church in Bacchus Marsh.

The complex is of regional historical significance as a representative embodiment of the way of life in the early settlement and for its association with religious and educational developments in community life which are pioneering to the locality and in the case of the cemetery, the earliest in the State.

It is of regional architectural significance as an example of a relatively intact surviving early cemetery and of scientific significance in demonstrating potential for archaeological research.

INTACTNESS: Poor.

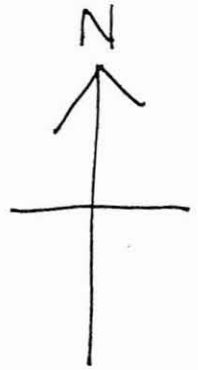
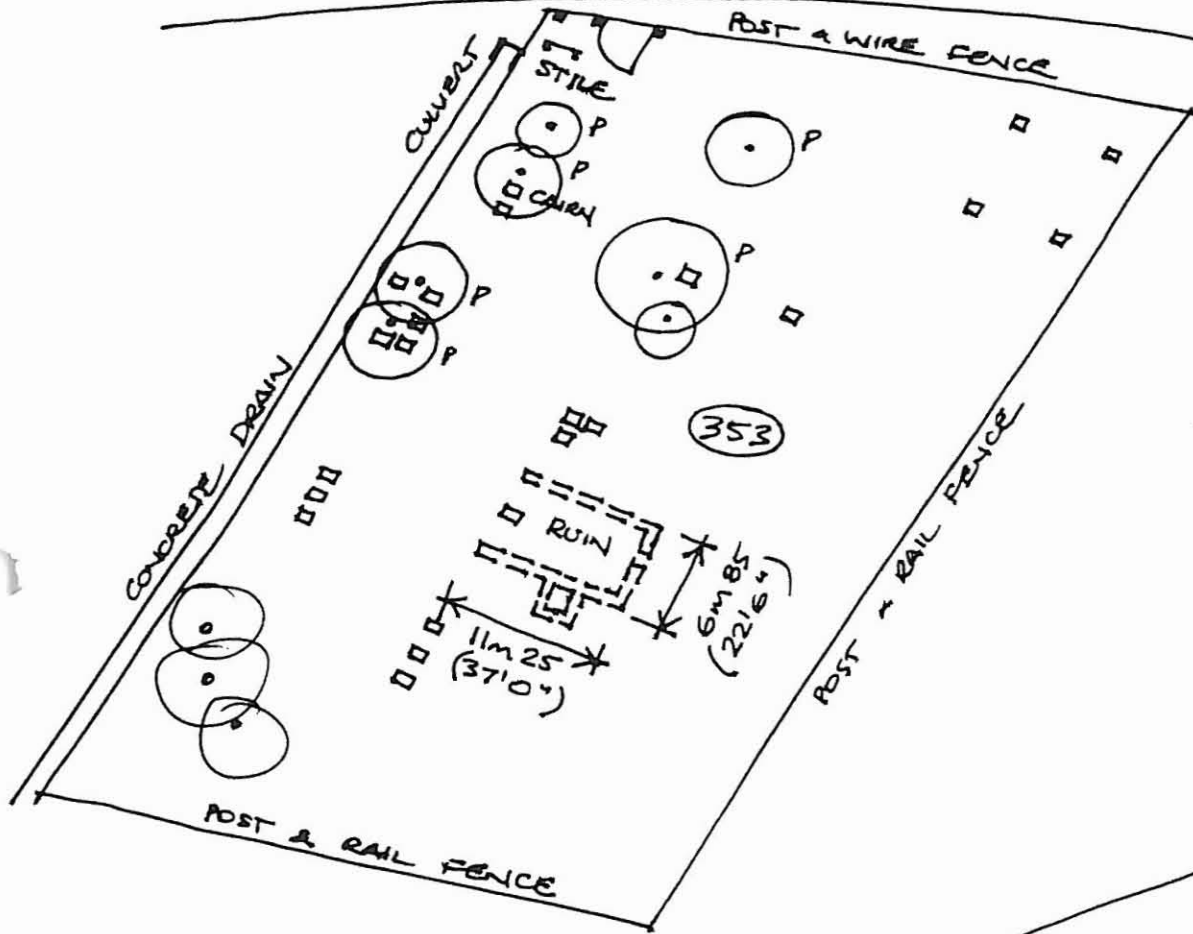
CONDITIONS & THREATS: Poor. Appears neglected and exposed to vehicular pollution and vandalism. Needs maintenance. The fence needs further repair.

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WESTERN HIGHWAY

TRAFFIC →



□ GRAVESTONE
 P MAME PINUS

WESTERN FREEWAY

TRAFFIC →