

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name	St Bernards Catholic Church complex	
Address	10-38 Patterson Street COBURG	Significance Level 2004 ;
Place Type	Church	



St Bernard's Catholic Church - 10-38 Patterson Street, COBURG,

Recommended Heritage Protection	VHR - HI - PS -
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Integrity

Minor Modifications

History and Historical Context

St Bernard's Catholic Church and School was officially opened on this site on 27 April, 1941 when the new building was blessed by Archbishop Daniel Mannix. The name of St Bernard of Clairvaux was chosen by Father McGee after the College of that name, which he attended in Ireland. The complex had actually been in use at least since February of that year when the school opened with an enrolment of 106 pupils who came from surrounding Catholic and State schools.

The events leading to the establishment of St Bernard's was described in its Golden Jubilee history published in 1991:

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"Before 1941, the nearest school for Catholics living in East Coburg was either St Paul's Coburg or St Margaret Mary's Brunswick North. In the late 1930s some enthusiastic people in East Coburg got together to discuss the idea of building a church school to cater for the needs of the Catholics in their area. The feeling of isolation and the disadvantage of the distance from a Catholic Church and school prompted these enthusiasts to press for a Parish centre in the area bounded by Sydney Road, Bell Street, The Grove and Merri Creek. A key figure amongst this group of people was Mrs Sullivan who went to see the Parish Priest of St Paul's Coburg, Father McGee, requesting permission to building a church school.. She was not satisfied with this interview, so she and another parishioner, Mrs Bryson, went straight to see Archbishop Mannix about the matter." (1)

The parishioners must have proved very persuasive for 'very soon afterwards' the Archbishop granted permission to establish a Parish centre, and, with the help of estate agent Hughie Mount, this site in Patterson Street was purchased. An adjoining house in Patterson Street was also purchased to act as the Presbytery. (2)

The new complex was designed by P J O'Connor and constructed by WO Longmuir & Son Pty Ltd. It comprised three classrooms which, for Sundays, could be converted into a 'Mass-centre' or church. The sacristy and altar were at the west end of the building and along the northern side of the building was a large verandah, which protected the entrances to the three classrooms. (3)

Throughout the 1940s enrolments at the school gradually rose and in 1953 St Bernard's was finally made a Parish in its own right. This was officially recognised on 12 January 1953 when Father Vin Arthur became St Bernard's first Parish Priest. As one of his first tasks Father Arthur organised the printing of a monthly Parish bulletin called 'The Bernadine', which was financed by local advertisers. Within two years, a new church for the Parish was built at the corner of Sheffield Street, which was opened and blessed by Archbishop Mannix on 18 December 1955. Designed by Conarg, and once again constructed by Longmuir & Co. the modern style of the building, designed to ensure that all people had a maximum view of the altar, was 'highly praised' by the Archbishop. It also meant that for the first time the church and school were in separate buildings, thus eliminating the need to convert classrooms each week. (4)

Enrolments continued to increase during the 1950s and new classrooms were added in 1957-58, including three new rooms on the north side of the 1941 building, which were designed by Stan Moran and constructed by Ern Wills (a parishioner), with the assistance of many local volunteers. When these were completed, the 1941 building was converted to a Parish Hall. (5)

SOURCES

- (1) St Bernard's Primary School, East Coburg. 1941-1991 (n.d.) p.1
- (2) *ibid.* p.1
- (3) *ibid.* p.1
- (4) *ibid.* p.5, 'The Bernadine' Souvenir Edition (December 1955?)
- (5) *ibid.* p.9

Description

Physical Description

St. Bernard's Catholic Primary School is an inter-war red brick two storey building with a gabled clay tile roof with unpainted cement rendered details, including the parapet edging and the window to the front elevation. The building has a squat red brick tower to the north of the front elevation. The building has been massively altered with new classrooms along both the north and south side elevations.

St Bernard's Catholic Church complex is notable for the St Bernard's Catholic Church, on the corner of Sheffield and

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Patterson Streets. It is a horizontally expressed clinker brick building with a flat roof. It is typical of post war ecclesiastical architecture in that it was not designed with a normal church plan (narthex/nave/trancepts etc), but rather displays an unorthodox plan shape which sought to involve the congregation more fully within the service. The building features coloured glass windows, often long vertical slits within the solid of the wall, as well as a long strip window under the curve of the eave line on the south-east elevation. Other fetures include relief brickwork portraying a crucifix on the east elevation and bright red double entrance doors.

Physical Condition

Good

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The St Bernard's Catholic Church on the corner of Sheffield and Patterson Streets, Coburg.

How is it significant?

The St Bernard's Catholic Church on the corner of Sheffield and Patterson Streets, Coburg is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Moreland.

Why is it significant?

Of historic significance, for its association with the St Bernard's Catholic Church and Primary School which has been located on this site since 1941 (building extant), built to provide a local Catholic church and primary school to the people of East Coburg. (AHC Criterion G.1)

Of aesthetic significance as a good example of post-war ecclesiastical architecture in Coburg, by architect Gregor Hirsch an émigré Romanina who started the firm CONARG. (AHC Criterion E.1)

Recommendations 2004

External Paint Controls

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Internal Alteration Controls

-

Tree Controls

-

Fences & Outbuildings

-

Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted

-

Incorporated Plan

-

Aboriginal Heritage Place

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This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.