

Name	House (former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church)	Reference in 1998 Marong Study	CF01
Address	10 Mulvahil Road, Woodvale ¹	Map reference	VicRoads 44 D3
Building type	Private residence	Survey date	July 2010 (external inspection only, visibility restricted)
Date of construction	1935	Recommendation	Include in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay
Significance	The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church built in 1935, is of local historical significance.		



Left: St Francis Xavier, date unknown, c. 1930s (Source: Ken Arnold, *Bendigo its Environs, The Way it Was*, Volume 1, p. 263). Right, North elevation, 2010.



Left: East elevation; note red brick addition. Right: East elevation, from the Loddon Valley Highway.



Left: Aerial view, 2010 (Source: City of Greater Bendigo). Right: Proposed extent of the Heritage Overlay, with the subject site shown as CF01.

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History

Campbell's Forest was named after Donald and Roderick Campbell, the first squatters on the Bullock Creek, who had taken up the 'Weddikar Run' before 1845, after which it was taken on by Messrs Nicholson and Thomas Myers. This partnership was dissolved on 23 July 1849, when the run was transferred to William and Thomas Myers. The population of the Campbell's Forest area was never large: as late as the mid-1880s, it numbered less than 50. This more than doubled, however, when the area was opened up for selection in 1910.²

On 18 July 1873, two acres of Crown allotment 1A, section 4, Parish of Nerring, south of Campbell's Forest, was set aside for the construction of St Francis Xavier Catholic Church. Patrick Donnellan, a farmer from Nerring and Patrick Graham, a Campbell's Forest publican, were the local representatives for the Church. The first confirmation was held at the church in 1925. In 1935 the original church was replaced with the present structure.³

St Francis Xavier had a large and active congregation until the late 1940s, with a Sunday mass of 55 in 1949, reflecting the presence in the district of the descendants of early Irish Catholic pioneers. Each year parishioners entered a float in the St Patrick's Day procession in Eaglehawk. The church was widely known for its annual balls and concerts, held in the Campbell's Forest hall. The congregation declined gradually from the 1950s. Father John Leahy presided over the last mass on 1 February 1971.⁴

The building was sold to Des Clark of Bendigo on 17 February 1978 and subsequently to Kevin and Judith Smith in 1981.⁵ In 1985 Peter Bray undertook works to convert it into a residence.⁶

Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes

Victoria's themes and sub-themes:

- 8.1: Maintaining spiritual life

Description & Integrity

(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' in leadlight work ⁷; 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 an

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'.

Comparative Analysis

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church is typical of many timber churches in small rural communities. These changed little in various respects between the 1870s and World War II, with most having a small or medium sized church facing the road directly in front and an open and informal landscape setting surrounding the building. Common elements include lancet windows, weatherboard walling, and timber roofs clad in corrugated galvanised steel. The Wesleyan Church at Poowong, near Korumburra in central Gippsland is very similar in its original form but is much earlier (1878; transepts 1890).⁸ The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church is also one of the few surviving timber churches in the City of Greater Bendigo.

The distinct bungalow and Arts and Crafts touches are of interest and include the weatherboard walling set off with cement sheet and battens in the upper gabling, generating a half-timbered effect. Triangular windows are also employed as a motif in this church, either as fanlights to form lancets from otherwise double-hung sash windows in the porch and nave sides, or as complete triangles, either with a flat base, as over the porch, or equilateral (as in the front gable).

Although chronologically quite late in use for this building (1935), not as successfully employed, and subsequently modified by adaptation works, the 'bungalow' and arts and crafts influences apparent here correspond with Lorne Presbyterian Church (1911) and Carnegie Methodist Church (1914),⁹ Mount Pleasant Uniting Church in Nunawading (1917), St George's Anglican Flemington (1923), and Balwyn Church of Christ (1926).¹⁰ The Campbell's Forest church is also comparatively large, its volume being closer to suburban Protestant churches of the inter-war period. The Anglican Church in Marong (1871) has a similar curved triangle in its west gable.

Assessment Against Criteria

Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of the City of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

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

Criterion B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City the of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

The former St Francis Xavier Catholic Church is believed to be a rare surviving timber church building in the municipality.

Criterion C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Greater Bendigo's cultural history.

N/A

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

N/A

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics in the context of the municipality.

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, the degree of alteration has detracted from the aesthetic significance of the building.

Criterion F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

N/A

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of the place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

N/A

Criterion F: Special association with life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Greater Bendigo's history.

N/A

Statement of Significance

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.

Recommendations

The property is recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Greater Bendigo Heritage Overlay. The extent of the Overlay is indicated in the above map, although the significant elements are confined to the original church building, an area of curtilage around the building (typically in the order of five to ten metres), and the front setback to the building from the road frontage. The various non-original additions and alterations to the building are not significant.

External Paint Colours	No
Internal Alterations Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	No
Victorian Heritage Register	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated plan	No
Aboriginal heritage place	No

Identified By

Andrew Ward, 1998.

References

Ken Arnold, *Bendigo its Environs, The Way it Was*, Volume 1, Crown Castleton Publishers, 2003.

Ray Wallace, *Shades of the Past: A History of Campbells Forest and Yarraberb*, Back To Committee, 1993.

Andrew Ward *et al*, City of Greater Bendigo Heritage Study (Marong) Study Area, Stage 2, 1998.

Specific:

- ¹ Address changed from Mulvahil Road, Campbell's Forest, *Heritage Policy Citations Review*, 2011. November 2011.
- ² See, Ken Arnold, *Bendigo its Environs, The Way it Was*, Volume 1, Crown Castleton Publishers, 2003, p. 257, and Anon., *Shire of Marong 1864-1964*, unpaginated.
- ³ See, Ken Arnold, *Bendigo its Environs, The Way it Was*, Volume 1, Crown Castleton Publishers, 2003, p. 265.
- ⁴ Ray Wallace, *Shades of the Past: A History of Campbells Forest and Yarraberb*, Back To Committee, 1993, pp.52-54.
- ⁵ Pers comm., Kevin Smith and Ray Wallace (historian), November, 1992
- ⁶ Pers comm, Peter Bray, interview with Andrew Ward and Ray Wallace, June, 1998.
- ⁷ 'HIS' (*Iesus Hominum Salvator*) is a monogram used by the Roman Catholic Church, meaning 'Jesus, saviour of man'. Catholic Encyclopaedia online, www.newadvent.org
- ⁸ Miles Lewis (ed, contrib), *Victorian Churches*, National Trust, Melbourne, 1991, p. 131, item 307.
- ⁹ Miles Lewis (ed, contrib), *Victorian Churches*, National Trust, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 65, item 70 (Carnegie); 156, item 405 (Lorne).
- ¹⁰ The bungalow influence on Melbourne Churches is outlined by C Hamann in 'Architecture', in Andrew Brown-May and Shurlee Swain (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, Cambridge, Melbourne, 2006, p. 31.