

## HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

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**Name** Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence  
**Address** 2115 Heathcote-Redesdale Road REDESDALE **Grading** 2008 Local  
**Building Type** Church  
**Assessment by** Context Pty Ltd




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**Recommended Heritage Protection** VHR No HI No PS Yes  
**Designer / Architect** Payne, Thomasa **Architectural Style** Victorian Period (1851-1901)  
 Gothic Revival  
**Maker / Builder** Price, John

### Integrity

Fair

## History and Historical Context

### History of the Shire of Metcalfe

Note: The following history is a series of excerpts from *Twigg, K. and Jacobs, W (1994) Shire of Metcalfe Heritage Study Volume 1 Environmental History, Ballarat.*

The area around Port Phillip was explored by Sir Thomas Mitchell, the Surveyor General of New South Wales, and a large party in 1836, on the homeward leg of a journey to Portland Bay. Impressed by what he perceived as the bounty of

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the land, Mitchell named the area Australia Felix.

Less than a year after Mitchell's return to Sydney with glowing reports of the stocking capabilities of the land in the south, the first overlanders arrived in the district and soon thereafter laid claim to the rich basaltic plains of the Campaspe and Coliban Rivers. The pastoral occupation of the Shire was completed by 1843 and the process of shaping the landscape to fit the demands of white settlement gathered pace.

Over the next decade many of the earliest pastoral runs were subdivided; Bowman's Run, for instance, was split in two to form Stratford Lodge and Sutton Grange [1]. It was also a period of improvements around homesteads.

During the 1850s the pressure of supplying sufficient food to the newly discovered gold diggings and the growing demand for land by miners led to the survey and sale of large areas of land in proximity to the goldfields.[2] At the time of the first land sales in the 1850s there were no restrictions on the amount of land an individual could buy and most squatters managed to purchase between 3,000 and 6,000 acres of the old leasehold. However the land sales also attracted wealthy entrepreneurs and successful miners. At Stratford Lodge almost the entire leasehold was offered for sale and between 1856 and 1857, William Degraives, successful flour miller and William Williamson created something of a stir by buying between 12000 and 13000 acres each.

In September 1851 the Mount Alexander gold rush exploded after a small notice in the Argus announced a discovery in the Mount Alexander Ranges. Serle has suggested the Alexander rush set the standard for all subsequent rushes and argues that at no other goldfield was gold spread so shallowly and liberally over such a large area.[3] The temporary nature of many early gold rush workings is witnessed by isolated ruins or a cluster of buildings which once formed a small settlement. By contrast the townships which survive from this period still retain the layout, the commercial street design and many of the residences and solid public buildings of their goldfield origins.

By the late 1850s it was clear that road making was needed and it was agreed that the responsibility for works should be given to each local district. The Metcalfe Roads board was proclaimed on 14 August 1860 and wasted little time in seeking money for road construction. At its first meeting it was moved that the Board 'with as little delay as possible obtain a portion of the government grant for the present year.'[4] Rates were also levied on residents and by 1865 this must have amounted to over £1000, for this level had to be reached before a district could be proclaimed a Shire. The Shire was proclaimed in July 1865 and at this time its area was substantially increased by the voluntary addition of Elphinstone, West Faraday, Harcourt and Barkers Creek.

A seventeen mile branch line was opened to Redesdale in 1891 leaving the Melbourne-Mount Alexander and Murray River Railway at Redesdale Junction to the north of Kyneton, and then continuing through the stations of Green Hill, Edgecombe, East Metcalfe, Emberton and Barfold before terminating at Redesdale. The stations consisted of little more than a tin shed and a water tank but they rapidly became a focal point for the surrounding communities.

## **History of Redesdale**

The first scattered buildings of the township of Redesdale grew up near Monro's Crossing (Campaspe River) on the Kyneton Heathcote Road, catering to miners en route to the Heathcote old fields. During the early 1860s telegraph coaches followed this route daily carrying mail between the goldfields and Kyneton. Nevertheless, Redesdale was scarcely considered a place of significance and when Mr Bain suggested making a road to Redesdale in 1860 there was much amusement with someone responding he might as well make a road to the moon.[5]

More extensive settlement of the area in the 1860s by the Catholic settlers prompted the survey of the Redesdale Township and the sale of the first township blocks in 1871. Building work was characterised by the use of bluestone and by 1870 the main road boasted a police station, hotel, a Catholic Church, a post office, a bakery, a drapery and butchery with slaughter yards out the back.

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During this period Redesdale established itself as a solid agricultural township. After the construction of a branch line railway in 1891 the township became an important railhead.

## **Contextual History of Roman Catholics in Redesdale**

Father Horatio Geoghegan established the pastorate in the Kyneton region in the early 1860s. Geoghegan visited a number of small towns in the district to conduct services, including the small township of Redesdale. Following the influx of settlers during the gold boom, the small towns in the vicinity of Bendigo underwent substantial development. A number of Irish-Catholic settlers moved into the emerging township of Redesdale during this time, boosting the Catholic population and creating the demand for permanent worship facilities.[6] The first Roman Catholic Church at Redesdale was built in 1865, using bluestone that was probably acquired from one of the nearby quarries in the region. By the 1870s, however, the structure proved inadequate to cater for the needs of the growing community, and a new construction was planned.[7]

## **History of Roman Catholic Church of St. Laurence, Redesdale**

By the 1870s, Redesdale was home to a fairly substantial Roman Catholic community, and there was tangible need for the establishment of a permanent place of worship. The Roman Catholic Church of St. Laurence is built on land that was granted to representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the community of Redesdale on the 17th December 1872. The conglomerate was made up of the Right Reverend James Alipius Goold, Roman Catholic Bishop of Melbourne; the Reverend Henry Bradbee of Heathcote; and Michael McKenna, John Cooney and Charles Lyons, all of Redesdale.[8]

The land was donated to the Church by Michael McKenna, who was also one of the trustees of the property.[9] The land was located in a prominent position within the Redesdale township, and soon after their acquisition of the property, a stable had been constructed.[10] A stone wall is also evident on Parish Plans, running part of the boundary of Crown Allotment 3.[11]

The foundation stone for the new Roman Catholic Church was laid on the 6th April 1873, in a ceremony led by the Right Reverend Goold. Goold was born in 1812 in Ireland and was ordained as a priest in 1835, after which time he emigrated to Australia to serve in New South Wales. By the late 1840s, Goold was working in the Port Phillip District, where he saw the greatest need for the development of the Roman Catholic Church. He made frequent visits to the goldfields during the boom periods of the rushes in Bendigo and Ballarat, and was a prominent figure in the development of Catholic education in Victoria.[12]

The contract for construction of the Church was let to Mr. Price of Malmsbury.[13] Like the previous Church, the building used bluestone in its construction, which was probably acquired from one of the quarries operating in the vicinity. Initial designs of the Church included a chancel and sacristy to which a spire was to be added, but these features were ultimately omitted due to increased costs of construction of the Church. Bill Rowe has suggested that the costs were due to 'problems with contractors', though the exact nature of the problems themselves is not known. There was, however, a substantial increase in the cost of the construction of the nave, which jumped from £1,400 to £1,500, and perhaps contributed to the necessarily curtailed design.[14] The ultimate cost of the construction of the Church came to some £2,000, undoubtedly a windfall for Mr. Price, the builder.[15]

Construction was completed in the second half of 1874, and the building opened by the Very Reverend Dr. Fitzpatrick, Vicar General of the Melbourne Diocese.[16] Father Mullins, a priest working in the Heathcote District, said the first mass in the new Church.[17]

The Church played a vital role in the community, and was well attended by the local population. In 1875, records indicate that attendance totalled 250, though the period for which this figure was recorded is not known.[18] Members of the

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congregation and the local community held a working bee to complete works on the surrounds of the building in August 1888. Works included painting, gravelling and tree planting.

In 1891, the decision to complete construction of the Church in accordance with the original designs was reached. Mr Payne, an architect from Brunswick, was employed to complete plans and supervise construction of the building. Tenders were called for and the work completed by early 1892. The building was reopened and blessed by Dr. Revill on the 10th April 1892.[19]

In 1915, Titles records indicate that the ownership of the Church was transferred to the Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Sandhurst.[20]

Works were undertaken in 1948 to repair parts of the roofing structure that had deteriorated. Steel reinforcing rods were inserted across the walls, and repairs made to mortar and plastering.[21]

In 1960, the original slate roof was replaced with galvanised iron.[22]

[1] Randell, (1979) *Pastoral Settlement in Northern Victoria*, Vol. 2: *The Campaspe District*, Chandos, Burwood.p.138

[2] Powell, J.M. (1970) *The public lands of Australia Felix; settlement and land appraisal in Victoria 1834-91 with special reference to the Western Plains*, Oxford University Press, New York, p .67

[3] Serle, Geoffery (1963), *The Golden Age: A history of the colony of Victoria 1851 - 1861*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p. 23

[4] Metcalfe Roads Board Minutes, 10 September 1860

[5] *Taradale Express*, 16 December 1871

[6] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), *Shire of Metcalfe Heritage Study Volume 1, Thematic Environmental History*, Shire of Metcalfe, December 1994, p. 102.

[7] Karen Twigg and Wendy Jacobs, (1994), p 102.

8] Certificate of Title, Vol. 610, Fol. 906.

[9] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), p. 102.

[10] Parish Plan of the Town of Redesdale, 16/7/1906.

[11] Parish Plan of the Town of Redesdale, 16/7/1906.

[12] Austalian Dictionary of Biography online, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040300b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040300b.htm), accessed 1/9/08

[13] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), p. 102.

[14] Rowe, Bill (1989), *Redesdale: Yesterday and Today My Last Hurrah*, the Author, Redesdale, Victoria, p. 27.

[15] Rowe, Bill (1989), p. 27.

[16] Rowe, Bill (1989), p. 27.

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[17] Rowe, Bill (1989), p. 27.

[18] Rowe, Bill (1989), p. 27.

[19] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), p. 102.

[20] Certificate of Title, Vol. 610, Fol. 906.

[21] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), p. 102.

[22] Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), p. 102.

## Primary sources

Parish Plan of the Town of Redesdale, 16/7/1906.

Certificates of Title.

Metcalfe Road Board Minutes, 10 September 1860

*Taradale Express*, 16 December 1871

## Secondary sources

Randell, J.O. (1979) *Pastoral Settlement in Northern Victoria , Vol. 2: The Campaspe District*, Chandos, Burwood

Randell, J. O. (1985). *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor, Victoria

Twigg, Karen & Jacobs, Wendy (1994), *Shire of Metcalfe Heritage Study*, Ballarat, Victoria.

Austalian Dictionary of Biography online, [www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040300b.htm](http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040300b.htm), accessed 1/9/08

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## Relevant Historical Australian Themes

8.0 Building community life

8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

## Description

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## Physical Description

The Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence is a fine example of the Gothic Revival style constructed in 1873-74, with the sacristy added in 1891. The version of the Gothic Revival that is evident includes the French Gothic tradition of a relatively small footprint in comparison with its considerable height. St Laurence is a sophisticated design employing a steeply pitched roof greater than 45 degrees, corner buttresses known as 'angle buttresses', and the use of stone mouldings and tracery. Bluestone in particular is difficult to cut into fine mouldings and the window hood mouldings and reveals are cut from bluestone. This church displays a high degree of craftsmanship in the tracery of the windows that are cut from sandstone in a geometric pattern with stone mullions.

The Roman Catholic church of St Laurence has two porches and a sacristy constructed in 1891 to the original design. The bluestone masonry is of a high quality and the additions to the church are indistinguishable from the original construction. An earlier slate roof has been replaced with corrugated iron.

The Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence is a studied essay in the Gothic style applied to a small parish church. The church is encircled by a drystone wall that predates the church, and the site has some mature trees as part of its setting. There is also evidence of stone drainage channels on the site. These serve to frame the entrance to the church from the road.

The interior contains a memorial window to Peter and John McNiffs. The ceiling is of timber lining boards over a scissor truss roof. There are timber pews and a confessional.

## Physical Condition

Good

## Conservation Policy

None Specified

## Comparative Analysis

Several bluestone churches are designed in the Gothic Revival Style and the Catholic Church at Axedale is comparable in architectural styling, although the Church of St Laurence is much earlier.

## Statement of Significance

*What is significant?*

The Roman Catholic church of St Laurence constructed in 1873-74, including the additions made in 1891 are significant. The setting of the church including the drystone wall, stone drainage channels, and the mature trees including pines and peppercorns are also significant.

*How is it significant?*

The Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

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*Why is it significant?*

The Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence is of historical significance for its association at its inception in 1872 with the Bishop of Melbourne, the Right Rev. Alipius Goold, and later at its enlargement, by the Rev. Dr Reville in 1892. St Laurence is tangible evidence of the importance of the Catholic community in the Redesdale area, demonstrating their rapid growth from 1865 when a church was first constructed, to 1873 when the first church was no longer suitable for the burgeoning population of the district. *Criterion A*

The church is of aesthetic significance for its sophisticated design based on the French Gothic models incorporating steeply pitched roofs and vertical proportions. In comparison with other churches in the study area the Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence displays a high degree of craftsmanship in stone masonry by employing bluestone for some simple mouldings and including window tracery of sandstone. *Criterion E*

The church is of social significance to the Redesdale Community as a place of continuous worship for over 130 years. *Criterion G.*

## Assessment Against Criteria

### HERCON CRITERIA

Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion A*

Possession of uncommon rare or endangers aspects of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion B*

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history. *Criterion C*

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments. *Criterion D*

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. *Criterion E*

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

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

Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history. *Criterion H*

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## Recommendations 2008

<b>External Paint Controls</b>	Yes
<b>Internal Alteration Controls</b>	No
<b>Tree Controls</b>	Yes
<b>Fences &amp; Outbuildings</b>	Yes
<b>Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted</b>	No
<b>Incorporated Plan</b>	None Specified
<b>Aboriginal Heritage Place</b>	No

## Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the Roman Catholic Church of St Laurence at 2115 Heathcote Redesdale Road be added as an individual place to the Heritage Overlay of the City of Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme with the schedule entry as shown above. The extent of registration is the whole of the property as defined by the title boundaries.