HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

Name	Presentation Convent		
Address	18 Pohlman Street HEATHCOTE	**Grading**	2008 Local
Building Type	Convent/Nunnery		
Assessment by	Context Pty Ltd		

Recommended Heritage Protection	**VHR** No **HI** No **PS** Yes		
Designer / Architect	Kempson & Conolly	**Architectural Style**	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)
Maker / Builder	Unknown		

Integrity

High

History and Historical Context

History of Heathcote

The land around the former Shires of Strathfieldsaye and McIvor had a long history prior to the arrival of Europeans. The Jaara Jaara people are the original inhabitants of the area.

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

and named the area around Port Phillip *Australia Felix*.[1]

Much of land around Heathcote was dominated by a series of pastoral runs established from the 1830s. Henry Munro took up an extensive tract of land in early 1838 which was later subdivided to form *Campaspe (Coliban Estate)* and *Spring Plains* Stations.[2] By 1850, there was no available land remaining in all of northern Victoria.[3]

The discovery of gold at McIvor Creek in 1852 changed the face of the district and brought about new patterns of settlement and expansion. By 1853, over one hundred prospectors had assembled at Wild Duck Creek in the hopes of striking it rich. This number expanded the following year, and included some 2,000 Chinese immigrants.[4] Hotels were big business in any gold rush town a spate of hotels were established in Heathcote before 1860 including the Mt. Ida Hotel, the Union Hotel, the Camp Hotel, the Prince of Wales Hotel, the Lake Hotel, the Victoria Hotel and the Rodney Hotel.

The government camp was established at Heathcote in 1853. By 1858 Heathcote boasted a permanent postmaster and a daily mail service to Melbourne. A camp doctor had been stationed at Heathcote quite early on, and by 1853 a further five private doctors had expanded options for those in need of medical treatment.[5] The Heathcote Hospital was built in 1859.

Assistant Surveyor Phillip Chauncey surveyed the town site of Heathcote prior to the first land sale at Heathcote on the 24th January 1854.[6] A total of eighty seven quarter-acre blocks were auctioned at the Police Office in the government camp.[7] Much of the early development in the township was clustered around High Street.

The Heathcote and Waranga District Roads Board was established in October 1861.[8] Heathcote became a borough in 1863, and its council enlarged to nine members.[9] The district survived until 1863, when Waranga and Heathcote became separate entities.[10] The Shire of McIvor was proclaimed in the Victorian *Government Gazette* in December 1864. It was not until 1892 that the Borough of Heathcote officially amalgamated with the Shire of McIvor.

The Heathcote National School opened in 1853. The School was a private facility, and enrolments were known to fluctuate periodically, as itinerant prospectors' quest for gold pressed them to move to new rushes and new finds. Educational facilities were expanded in the 1860s with the opening of denominational schools by the Church of England, the Catholic and Methodist Churches. In 1873, compulsory free and secular primary education was legislated by the Government and the Heathcote Common School No. 300 opened, only to close by the mid 1860s.[11] The South Heathcote State School opened in April 1874.[12]

Towards the end of the 1870s, the initial spark of the gold rushes had faded and changes in the agricultural industry were brought on with the 42nd Second Section of Grant's Amended Land Act of 1865, which prompted the acquisition of smaller holdings by a number of residents in the district. As well as dairying and farming enterprises, tobacco crops and vineyards were planted in the area. There were also three flourmills in operation in Heathcote by the 1880s.[13] Grazing, agriculture and dairying remained mainstays in the Heathcote community and the significant pastoral estates in the region flourished. Much of the produce from farming was sold in and around Heathcote which, as it continued to expand, proved a viable market. A Chinese market garden had been established by Kit Foo in 1868, on ten acres of land on the west side of Wild Duck Creek. [14]

The railway from Bendigo to Heathcote officially opened on the 1st October 1888.[15] Development of the railway was of benefit to farmers in the district and allowed the diversification of their markets, as well as more efficient transport of imports into the community, and generally increased profitability. Livestock yards built at the station in 1890 were of further advantage to the farming community.[16]

After the turn of the century, development of Heathcote continued. Between 1910 and 1913 the Licensing Board enforced the de-licensing of many of Heathcote's numerous hotels. War broke out on the 4th August 1914 and a total of fifty one

men from Heathcote served. The Second World War had an equally devastating impact on Heathcote. Air spotting posts were established in Heathcote, and the government acquired some 15,000 acres of land at Puckapunyal which was set aside as a military training camp.

In November 1994, the Shire of McIvor was restructured and part of its area, including Heathcote, was transferred to the City of Greater Bendigo.

Contextual history of Catholicism in Heathcote

In the late 1840s the Bishop of Melbourne, James Alipius Goold, detached Kilmore as a separate mission from Melbourne [17]. This new parish was extensive and included the regions of Gisborne, Woodend, Kyneton, Castlemaine, Eaglehawk, Echuca, Wodonga, Mansfield, Wood's Point, Warburton, Donnybrook and Kilmore; an expanse that was later divided into thirty parishes[18]. The first priest to oversee this new Kilmore parish was Rev. Fr. Charles Clark[19].

The first Catholic priest at the Heathcote was Fr. Patrick Birch, who was stationed at the first Catholic establishment 'Sacred Heart' located at South Heathcote (Argyle) on a site south of Brightwell's Hill[20]. In 1856 the site comprised of a large weatherboard chapel and manse[21], with the chapel functioning as a male and female Roman Catholic School[22] and also for Sunday Mass[23].

The Sacred Heart chapel was destroyed in a violent storm on 8 December 1862, with a wooden chapel erected to serve as a temporary school and chapel[24]. John Fleury, a Kilmore architect was commissioned to design a new church, St Mary's, to be built on the corner of Pohlman and Ebden Streets[25]. In 1863 tenders were called for the work, with Benjamin Flee and his partner, Bell the successful bidders[26].The foundation stone for St Mary's was laid on 13 March 1864 by Archbishop Goold, who was assisted by Geelong's Dean Hayes of Geelong and Heathcote's Fr. M Brannigan. The new church was consecrated on 22 October 1865[27], and in 1894 was joined by a new presbytery, as it had been 'noted that this [Heathcote] was still the only parish within the diocese without proper accommodation for its clergy.[28]' This structure was demolished in the late 1970s due to disrepair and replaced with a new Parish house[29].

History of Presentation Convent, 18 Pohlman Street, Heathcote

The first Sacred Heart Chapel was built in 1856, but destroyed in a violent storm in 1862, and a wooden chapel was erected to serve as a temporary school and chapel[1]. In 1910 a new Sacred Heart School was built. Soon after the completion of construction, Father O'Dee conceived the idea of building a convent to accommodate the nuns that would in turn 'further the religious education of this town[2].' A letter dated September 1922 described the plan of the proposed convent in detail[3].Fundraising for the construction of the convent commenced, and included balls, dances and other events to raise money for the building fund.

Architects C. G. Kempson and W. P. Connolly were responsible for the design of the Presentation Convent in Heathcote. The partnership between the two began in 1890. Both had been employed as chief assistants for the firm Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy, and began their own practice when the firm dissolved. They often worked on projects for the Catholic Church, and were responsible for the design of the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Bendigo (1908), a convent at Heidelberg (1911), the Roman Catholic Church at Ballan (1911) and St. Brendan's Senior School in Flemington (1914).[4]

Correspondence from Father O'Dee in 1925 to the Mother General says that the Presentation Convent was nearing completion and soon would be ready to be occupied, and on Wednesday, May 26, 1926 *The McIvor Times* printed the following:

The opening of the fine two storied brick convent recently completed will be held on Sunday next, 30th May. The Convent will be in charge of the Presentation Nuns of Elsternwick. Rev. Father Power, of Corpus Christi College, Werribee, will perform the opening ceremony, and the sermon will be preached by Rev. Dr. Barry.'[5]

Prior to the opening, it is reported that the four sisters and some community members undertook some finishing touches to the site, including polishing the floors and stairs[6]. Little is noted on any further maintenance or other works during this time. Over the years the site continued as a boarding school for girls and in 1941 the schools attendances were low, with only seven boarders. However, the war scare in Melbourne saw many concerned parents send their children to Heathcote, and the balcony soon had to be used due to lack of space[7]. After this time the school numbers continued to increase and the balcony was enclosed and used as a classroom[8].

In 1959 the Holy Rosary School was built next door after transferring from their South Heathcote Sacred Heart site and the two schools combined[9], with the boarding school closing and the nuns continuing with their day teaching until 1974[10]. The previous building of the Sacred Heart School in South Heathcote was converted into a church upon the schools[11].

The new Holy Rosary School was a primary school for both boys and girls, while also teaching girls at a secondary school level until around 1960[12]. The Presentation Sisters left Heathcote in 1974 and the first Principal appointed, who was said to have lived in the old convent from 1975-1977[13].

In 1977 the convent was said to have been in poor condition and was not being used by the school[14]. A committee was formed and it was decided that the building would get a new use as an accommodation centre, to be called the O'Dee Centre[15]. The setting up of this facility required an overhaul of the existing plumbing and sewerage system and the instating of a permanent caretaker, new stove, urns, and adequate heating and flooring[16]. Other works included furnishing and painting, and kitchen refurbishment[17].

It is reported that during its successful 8 years of operation over 13,000 people were accommodated, resulting in over $75,000 of profits which were said to have been used for maintenance and building improvements and also donations to charity[18].

The neighbouring Holy Rosary School was experiencing an increase in numbers in the mid 1980s, leading to the school needing to use some rooms in the O'Dee Centre[19]. In 1985 the building was handed back to the Holy Rosary School for use, and in 1987 further renovations were carried out in order for the school to make more use of the building, including the removal of 'two walls and opening up the ground floor to create a large activity room, updating of the kitchen and painting of the staffroom and administration areas'[20].

In the mid 1980s there were other numerous works to the building and yard, including new amenities, storage shed, asphalting, and beautification works[21]. In 1996 further works took place in the school grounds, and it is thought that new toilets have been added and the office area extended[22].

A building with a history, initially as Heathcote's first Presentation Convent, then becoming the site for the Sacred Heart Catholic School, and later the O'Dee Accommodation Centre; the building is currently owned by the Roman Catholic School and still being used as a building for the Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School No. 1252.

[1] Randell, J. O. (1985), *McIvor: A History of the Shire and the Township of Heathcote*, Shire of McIvor, p. 1.

[2] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 1.

[3] Randell, J. O. (1985),. p. 8.

[4] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 31.

[5] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 28.

[6] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 21.

[7] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 225.

[8] Randell, J. O. (1985), pp. 79 - 80.

[9] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 35.

[10] Hall, T. R. (1985), *History of the town and district: Heathcote*, reproduced (1985) with permission, p. 7.

[11] Hall, T.R.(1985), p. 11.

[12] Hall, T.R.(1985), p. 12.

[13] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 43.

[14] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 135.

[15] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 56.

[16] Randell, J. O. (1985), p. 31.

[17] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), *The Catholic Parish of Heathcote: a history 1856-(1997*), Parish of Heathcote, Victoria, p 1

[18] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p. 1.

[19] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p. 1.

[20] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p. 2.

[21] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p 2.

[22] Randell, J.O, McIvor (1985), p 137

[23] Ebsworth, Rev. Walter (1973), *Pioneer Catholic Victoria*, The Polding Press, Melbourne

[24] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p 3

[25] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p 3

[26] Randell, J.O, McIvor, (1985), p 137

[27] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p 3

[28] McHarg, M, and Traynor, R, (1997), p 6

[29] Randell, J.O, McIvor, (1985), p 141

Primary sources

Miles Lewis Architectural Index, State Library of Victoria

Secondary sources

Bick, D.V, and Penney, Dr. J. (2002) *Heathcote-Strathfieldsaye Heritage Study Stage One*, unpublished

Ebsworth, Rev. Walter (1973), *Pioneer Catholic Victoria,* The Polding Press, Melbourne

Hall, T.R, (1985), *History of the town and district: Heathcote*, unpublished manuscript

Hewat, T, (1983), *Bridge over Troubled Waters: A history of the Shire of Strathfieldsaye*, Melbourne: Macmillan

McHarg, M and Traynor, R, (1997), *The Catholic Parish of Heathcote: A History 1856-1997,* Bendigo: Bendigo Modern Press

Randell, J.O, (1985), *McIvor: a history of the shire and the township of Heathcote*, Burwood: Brown Prior

Community consultation with J. Hicks, 27/6/07

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

8.0 Building community life

8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

Description

Physical Description

The former Presentation Convent is designed in a conservative style for its construction date of 1925. It combines elements of transitional Victorian architecture in the symmetry and use of cast iron balustrading and brackets. The use of red brick and render would place this building stylistically in the Edwardian era, however the rough cast render to the gable ends and the terra cotta tiled roof suggest Interwar styling. The ground floor front windows are designed in a very similar manner to those of Our Lady Help of Christians Church at 59 Ebden Street, suggesting that the same designer or architect designed both these buildings. The stylized Serlian motifs of these windows are formed in concrete, however unlike those of the church, these form a prominent feature by projecting forward of the front wall and are surmounted by small rendered crosses. Crosses are repeated on the apex of both gable ends. The arch window feature is repeated throughout the building in a simplified form where doorways or windows require more prominence. Horizontal emphasis is given to the building through the use of string courses in render that define the first floor level and the sill level of windows. The front windows and door beneath the verandah are of leaded glass in a squared design.

The convent is set in expansive grounds that contained a small outbuilding of 1920s construction in red brick with a tiled roof, and a number of mature trees including several palm trees planted in a group. The outbuilding was demolished in 2008.

The site also contains the Holy Rosary Primary School which is not of interest.

Physical Condition

Good

Conservation Policy

None Specified

Comparative Analysis

Kempson and Connolly were also responsible for Our Lady Help of Christians Church, 59 Ebden Street, Heathcote, which is designed in a similar style.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The former Presentation Convent built in 1925 and the palm trees are of significance. The Holy Rosary School situated on the same site is not of significance.

How is it significant?

Presentation Convent is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Greater Bendigo.

Why is it significant?

The Presentation Convent is of historical significance for its associations with Father O'Dea whose desire to see nuns assist in the work of the parish in Heathcote led to the building of the convent and to the setting up of Catholic primary education in Heathcote. *Criterion A*

Architects Kempson and Connolly who also designed the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Bendigo, were associated with the design of a number of buildings for the Catholic church. Although relatively conservative in design, the Presentation Convent makes a strong statement on the corner of Pohlman and Ebden Street and is comparable with Our Lady Help of Christians church on the opposite corner which is designed in similar materials. *Criterion E*

Despite the original use of the building now being redundant, the current use as an adjunct to Holy Rosary School is one in which the continuing associations with the Catholic Church and the provision of education in Heathcote, are able to continue. *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*

Recommendations 2008

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	Yes
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited Uses May Be Permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	Yes
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

Other Recommendations

It is recommended that the Presentation Convent at 18 Pohlman Street, Heathcote 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. The recommended Incorporated Plan is the 'Permit Exemption Incorporated Plan - Former Shires of McIvor and Strathfieldsaye.'