



REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES – ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 6.2 Establishing schools
- 6.5 Educating people in remote places
- 8.6 Worshipping

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 402 Education and science
- 406 Religion
- 605 Famous and infamous people

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The convent building is a well-resolved and pleasing stone and iron building, set within a picturesque cottage garden and designed as an adaptation of the Australian homestead design, complete with encircling verandahs. (Criterion 1.1)

The school-church is a fine Inter-War Romanesque style stone building characterized by its robust form and picturesque massing, and also featuring round-headed arch windows and prominent gables. (Criterion 1.1)

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson, is a fine example of the work of architect-priest Monsignor John Hawes and demonstrates high quality craftsmanship in their design and execution. (Criterion 1.2)

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson, is complimentary structures that stand alongside each other facing the main road, and combine to form a remote but pleasing cultural environment. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson is significant in demonstrating the expansion of the Catholic Church in the Geraldton Diocese during the time of Bishop James Patrick O'Collins (1930-1941). (Criterion 2.2)

* For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, R., Irving, R., Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture. Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present*, Angus and Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.

For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J. *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O. *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson was designed by architect/priest, John Cyril Hawes (1876-1956), and is associated with the Bishop of Geraldton, James Patrick O'Collins, and was built by Enrico ('Henry') Boschetti. (Criterion 2.3)

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson demonstrates the important role played by Catholic orders in both education and Catholic parish life in Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson has potential to be used as a teaching site for the history of architectural design in Western Australia in the twentieth century. (Criterion 3.1)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson has social value in contributing to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.1)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson is a representative example of the type of religious educational facilities established in remote areas to address the needs of isolated Catholics. (Criterion 6.1)

The school-church building is representative of the Inter-War Romanesque style of architecture of which Monsignor John Hawes was a key practitioner. (Criterion 6.1)

12. 3 CONDITION

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson is in good condition and has been well maintained, although some unsympathetic repairs have been carried out to cracks in the stonework of the school-church building using cement rich mortar.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson has a high degree of integrity.

The school building was originally designed with two classrooms and was used for mass on weekends. In the early 1950s, the school was modified to a church building by the addition of a sanctuary and sacristy, designed by Summerhayes & Associates. The school was closed in 1965 and the building is managed by the Catholic Diocese of Geraldton, who occasionally use it for religious functions.

The convent was originally designed to accommodate the Presentation Sisters who operated the school and comprised three bedrooms, a parlour, a kitchen and refectory, and a small chapel. The building is currently used as a private residence.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson has a high degree of authenticity and retains the majority of its original fabric.

The school-church was extended in the 1950s, when the sanctuary and sacristy were added to the western end of the original school building. This extension was consistent with the original design intent (the west front of the school had a temporary timber wall) and does not adversely affect the authenticity of the place. The authenticity of the round-headed arch windows is not known.

Changes to the convent building include the partial enclosure of the verandah along the north and west elevations, and the extension of the bathroom and wash-house located on the southwest and northwest corners respectively.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Wayne Moredoundt, Historian and Palassis Architects, in August 2004, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Chapman Valley area was first explored by Europeans in 1839, when Lieutenant George Grey's party was forced to travel overland from Gantheaume Bay to the Swan River Settlement, after being shipwrecked at the mouth of the Murchison River on an intended exploration of the Exmouth Gulf Region. Grey named the Murchison, Bowes, Hutt and Chapman rivers, and named the district the Province of Victoria.¹ Impressed with the beauty and agricultural potential of much of the district, he wrote in his diary,

Now being certain that the district we were in was one of the most fertile in Australia, I named it the 'Province of Victoria' in honour of Her Majesty ... I have seen no other which has such an extent of good country. [Although it was] the very end of the dry season yet I pictured to myself the bleating sheep and lowing herds, wandering over these fertile hills.²

Grey's views were not endorsed by Captain Stokes, who, in 1841, led an expedition to Champion Bay (Geraldton) in the *Beagle*, and took a party inland as far as the Moresby Flat Top Ranges. He formed a negative view regarding the area's potential for settlement, an opinion supported by Landor, the following year, who put Grey's positive impressions down to he and his party being in the latter stages of 'starvation' and, therefore, 'probably suffering under [an] hallucination'.³

From the 1830s, there had been unexplained stock deaths on the pastures of the Swan Valley, which led to cattle and sheep being transferred to land in the Avon Valley.⁴ Throughout the 1840s, there was a continuing shortage of good pastoral land in the Swan River Colony, as well as a shortage of labour and capital, a situation which depressed the economic well-being of the settlers. This state of affairs was further exacerbated when the Avon Valley experienced drought conditions in 1848-49. Land settlement further afield from already established settlement was discouraged, however, as this would have necessitated increased Government expenditure on infrastructure.⁵

In the second half of the 1840s, various expeditions, both overland and along the coast, rediscovered the land Grey had described. In addition, coal deposits were discovered on the upper Irwin River (in 1846) and lead in the bed of the Murchison River (in 1848). The most important of these expeditions, which located good pastoral lands, was the one organized in 1848 by the York Agricultural Society, with the party comprising Augustus and Charles Gregory, and the experienced graziers, Thomas Lockier Burges, J. Walcott and A. Bedart.⁶ Following these favourable reports, in the 1850s, a number of large pastoral stations were established in the Chapman Valley-Northampton area, particularly five extensive pastoral leases, 'Narra Tarra', 'The Bowes', 'Oakabella', 'White Peak' and 'Mount Erin'. In addition, in 1849, the Geraldine Lead Mine, under the

1 W. de Burgh, 'The Stock Route to Champion Bay', *Early Days*, Vol. 10, Pt. 1, p. 75.

2 M.A. Bain, 'The Irwin Story', *Early Days*, Vol. 6, Pt. 5, p. 8.

3 M.A. Bain, 'The Irwin Story', *Early Days*, Vol. 6, Pt. 5, p. 9.

4 Michael J. Bourke, *On the Swan: A History of the Swan District Western Australia*, UWA Press, Perth, 1987, p. 89.

5 M.A. Bain, 'The Irwin Story', *Early Days*, Vol. 6, Pt. 5, pp. 7-21.

6 A.C. Gregory and F.T. Gregory, *Journals of Australian Explorations*, Brisbane, 1884, Hesperian Press Fascimile Edition, 2002.

management of Lockier C. Burges, began operations. By 1861, there were four lead and eight copper mines in the Victoria District.⁷

In 1874, work officially commenced on the Geraldton-Northampton Railway, the first Government rail line in the State, built to carry lead and copper from the mines in the Northampton mineral fields to the port at Geraldton. While the construction of the railway took longer and cost more than expected, it quickly became an important part of life in the Victoria District on its completion in 1879.⁸

The development of the Chapman Valley district for agricultural purposes began in 1879, when former employees at the 'Narra Tarra' mine selected farmland in the area, following closure of the mine due to falling mineral prices. In the 1890s, a Lands Officer was appointed for the Chapman Valley district, in keeping with the Forrest Government's policy of establishing closer agricultural settlement throughout the State. The Chapman State Farm was established to prove the suitability of the district for agricultural purposes, and by the end of the 1890s, demand for land in the district exceeded supply. The development of a Government Research Station at Nabawa in 1902 was also important for the agricultural settlement of the area.⁹

Following the passing of the *Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1896*, the Government began to acquire large pastoral landholdings for subdivision into agricultural blocks. In the first decade of the twentieth century, around 118,000 acres was bought in the Chapman area, subdivided and sold. Because the land was well-watered and arable, it was thought that the lots could be smaller than was common in the area, thereby making them more easily affordable. In 1904, the Government had repurchased and subdivided 56,840 acres of the 'Mt Erin Station'. From this subdivision, the townsite of Nanson became the first gazetted townsite in the Chapman Valley district in 1904, taking its name from J. L. Nanson, member of the Legislative Assembly for Greenough who was the main driver behind the Mt Erin land purchase.¹⁰

Shortly after the subdivision of the 'Mt Erin Station', 'Oakabella' Station was subdivided, then 'Narra Tarra' in 1908-09, and the 'Bowes' by 1911. 'White Peak' was not considered suitable for agriculture, but various parts were sold off privately over the years.¹¹ The price the Government paid for 'Narra Tarra' Station and 'Oakabella' drew criticism from prospective purchasers, because this determined the price at which the land was sold. The 'Narra Tarra Estate' Lots varied in size from 443 to 2002 acres and in price from 7/6 to £4-15-0 an acre, with the majority being under £1 an acre.¹²

Although a considerable quantity of land was made available for closer settlement with the opening up of these large pastoral leases, there was still a demand for more. As a result, the area around what is now Yuna was surveyed around 1910, and was quickly taken up by settlers.¹³

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- ⁷ Alfred Carson, 'The Champion Bay Country: Historical Highlights and Personal Recollection', *Early Days*, Vol. 3, Pt. 2, pp. 16-17.
- ⁸ G.J. Kelly, 'A History of Mining in the Geraldton District', *Early Days*, Vol. 6, Pt. 1, pp. 80-81.
- ⁹ *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1 January 1897, p. 11; *Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1896*; Sean Glynn, *Government Policy and Agricultural Development: A study of the role of government in the development of the Western Australian wheat belt, 1900-1930*, UWA Press, 1975, p. 86.
- ¹⁰ Suba, Tanya and Callow, Bruce, 'European Site Survey: Chapman Valley' prepared for Landcorp, 1993.
- ¹¹ P.A. McDonnell, *Chapman Valley Pioneers*, Geraldton Newspapers, 1974, Part 2, Entry 39.
- ¹² *West Australian Government Gazette*, 1910, pp. 497, 2544; *Geraldton Guardian*, 1 March 1910, p. 1.
- ¹³ *Geraldton Guardian*, 1 February 1969.

This process of settlement was encouraged by the construction of the Wokarina-Naraling branch line in 1910, and the extension of the line to Yuna in 1913. This development also impacted positively on the mining industry, with transit times for ore shipment reduced substantially. The line branched from the Geraldton-Northampton line north of Geraldton at the Wokarina junction siding, then passed through Yetna, Nanson, Nabawa and Naraling, then through Rockwell to Yuna. Two trains a week ran on the line, carrying passengers as well as freight. With the advent of rail in the area, the small town sites along the route expanded in population. This was especially the case with Nanson.¹⁴ After the first stage of the Geraldton-Yuna railway opened in 1910, Nanson became the centre for railway maintenance and home to gangers and their families. In addition to the siding, a large railway yard and associated buildings were also constructed. Between 1910 and 1930s other facilities and services were to be established at Nanson, including a post office, Road Board Hall, shops, a memorial hall, a bank.¹⁵

The organized practice of Catholicism in the Victoria district commenced with the celebration of the Mass in February 1857, with the first resident priest, Father Patrick McCabe, arriving at Champion Bay in 1860. McCabe commenced the building the first Catholic church in the area at Greenough in 1864, a project which was completed by his successor, Father Adolphus Lecaille, in 1867. The following year, the Santa Maria in Ara Coeli Church at Northampton was officially opened. Both the Greenough and Northampton churches also doubled as schools. By 1870, there were 885 Catholics in the Victoria district, about a third of the European population.¹⁶ The Catholic presence in the Victoria district was further strengthened with the building of the St Francis Xavier Church in Geraldton in 1870, a Catholic church in Irwin in 1872, in Bootenal in 1874, and St Thomas' Church in Greenough in 1878.

With the expansion of agricultural settlement, Bishop Gibney of Perth had wanted to make Geraldton the centre of Catholic education in the Victoria district. To bring this plan to fruition, Bishop Gibney, '...needed religious teaching orders willing to establish new convents and schools north of Perth' and who would relieve the load on the Sisters of Mercy already established in Geraldton.¹⁷ Although there were some private schools in Geraldton by the 1890s, many of the Catholic families favoured convent education, especially for girls, hence the demand for more teaching orders.¹⁸

The Presentation Sisters were first established in 1775 in Cork, Ireland, as a teaching order. In 1891, at the invitation of Bishop Gibney through his connections in Ireland, five of the Order's postulants came out to WA in 1891 to found the first Presentation community, joining the Sisters of Mercy at their convent school in Marine Terrace, Geraldton.¹⁹ The Presentation Sisters became the third order in Geraldton, the others being the Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of St Joseph, and then later a fourth Order, the Dominican Sisters, also

¹⁴ *Geraldton Guardian*, 1 February 1969.

¹⁵ Suba, Tanya and Callow, Bruce, 'European Site Survey: Chapman Valley' prepared for Landcorp, 1993.

¹⁶ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 66-71.

¹⁷ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, p. 53.

¹⁸ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, p. 120.

¹⁹ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 50-52.

came to Geraldton.²⁰ With the re-opening up of the mines in the Northampton area in 1894, Geraldton was growing to become one of the largest towns in Western Australia. To cope with the increase in population, a second group of Presentation Sister postulants from Ireland arrived in Geraldton in 1895.

In 1898, the Diocese of Geraldton was created, the second Diocese outside Perth, with William Bernard Kelly consecrated as Bishop. The Presentation Sisters were then placed under the jurisdiction of the Geraldton Diocese along with the Dominican Sisters.²¹ When Bishop Kelly took over as the Bishop of Geraldton, one of the first things he wanted to achieve was to expand the convent schools throughout the Victoria District. However, in order to achieve this, he needed to decentralise the Presentation Sisters' schools, which was a break from the order's strict traditional rules of enclosure. Kelly eventually was successful in relaxing this rule, and in 1899 some of the Presentation Sisters from the Geraldton convent went to Northampton to re-open St Joseph's convent and school. The Sisters of St Joseph who had departed for Eastern Goldfields some years previously had originally run this convent school.²²

In 1901, some of the Sisters then went to Roebourne which at that time did not have a Catholic school, and in 1902, Greenough was their next convent school, taking over from the Dominican Sisters who had left the district.²³ The Presentation Sisters went on to establish houses throughout many towns in the Geraldton Diocese over the next 60 years, as well as throughout the rest of the state and overseas.

In 1900, the Geraldton Diocese included around 7,000 Catholics, with eight churches, seven priests, six schools and twenty religious Sisters, who taught some 429 pupils. By 1911, the number of Catholics in the Diocese had increased to over ten thousand.²⁴

In 1913, while on a visit to Rome, Bishop Kelly discussed his plans for a cathedral in Geraldton with John Cyril Hawes, a qualified architect, who was in Italy studying for the priesthood. Kelly invited Hawes to Geraldton to take up duties as a priest and to help in the construction of the proposed Geraldton cathedral. After Hawes ordination in early 1915, he traveled to Western Australia, and soon commenced preliminary work on the Cathedral of St Francis Xavier in Geraldton. The first section of the Cathedral - the west front and nave - was officially opened in August 1918.²⁵

Hawes was appointed to the Parish of Mullewa in 1916, and, as well as ministering to the needs of the local parishioners, was involved in the design and construction of churches and other buildings in the Geraldton Diocese. These projects included Church of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Mullewa (1925, 1927), Church of St. Andrew, Carnamah (1930), Priesthouse, Mullewa (1930), Church of the Holy Cross, Morawa (1933), Church of St Lawrence, Bluff Point (1937), St Francis Xavier Cathedral, Geraldton (1938), Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson (1938),

²⁰ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 88 & 133.

²¹ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 133 & 145.

²² James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 133-134.

²³ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 154 & 182.

²⁴ Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn*, pp. 84, 129-130, 132, 143, 161-162.

²⁵ Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn*, p. 162; *Geraldton Guardian and Express*, 30 August 1938.

St John of God Convent and Chapel, Geraldton (1939), and Nazareth House, Bluff Point (1941).²⁶

In the late 1930s 'there was a noticeable increase in the number of young Catholic families taking up land in Nanson'.²⁷ One reason for this increase in population would have been the introduction the bulk handling of wheat, therefore providing work for both farmers and railway personnel. In 1936, the bin at Yuna was opened, 'followed three years later by bins at Naraling, Nabawa and Nanson'.²⁸ With a significant number of Catholic school-aged children, the Nanson convent and church-school was intended to ease the burden on Catholic parents of the Upper Chapman Valley whose children could either not easily travel to the other convent schools in other parts of the district or would otherwise have to attend the Presentation Sisters' convent schools at Geraldton or Northampton as boarders. In 1936, Reserve 21544 was gazetted as a Reserve vested in the Geraldton Diocese.²⁹ In early 1938, J.C. (now Monsignor) Hawes drew up plans for the project, and the foundation stone for the building was laid by the Bishop of Geraldton, James Patrick O'Collins, on Sunday 13 November 1938.³⁰ On 1 February 1939, Bishop O'Collins officially blessed and opened the *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*.³¹

Both the convent and school were constructed of locally quarried stone with corrugated galvanized iron roofs. The convent also incorporated the encircling verandahs, which were a widespread feature of residential accommodation in the harsh climate of the area, 8 rooms and a small chapel and was set close to the Geraldton-Yuna Road and to the banks of the Chapman River.³² In the case of the school buildings, the west front of the school was to be a temporary timber wall to allow for extensions in the future, a common practice in ecclesiastical architecture of the time.³³ Gum trees were later planted to provide future shade in the school grounds.³⁴

The builder of *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* was Enrico ('Henry') Boschetti, who had been working on the stone work of St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Geraldton until late 1938. Initially, Boschetti worked for the builders, Calligaro Bros. of Bootenal, but in the second half of the 1930s, sought work on his own account, specializing in marble and terrazzo monumental work. Boschetti's other work for the Diocese of Geraldton included the Church of St Lawrence Martyr, the altar for St Peter's Church at Greenough, the throne and tabernacle of the high altar of St Francis Xavier Cathedral, and the sarcophagus for the Cemetery Chapel of the Holy Spirit at Utakarra. Boschetti's terrazzo and cement work was a particular feature of the interior of the Nanson Convent of the Presentation Sisters.³⁵

26 John J. Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design: The Architecture of John Cyril Hawes 1876-1956*, UWA Press, Perth, 2000, pp. 387-391.

27 Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn*, p. 267.

28 Suba, Tanya and Callow, Bruce, 'European Site Survey: Chapman Valley' prepared for Landcorp, 1993.

29 *Government Gazette*, 19 June 1936, p. 937; & 2 July 1937, p. 1080.

30 Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, p. 187.

31 Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn*, p. 267.

32 James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 267-268.

33 Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, p. 188.

34 James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 268.

35 Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, pp. 145, 151, 181, 187, 190, 197, 222-223.

The cost of the school was approximately £650 and of the convent £700, with the work commencing in November 1938, and finishing on 29 January 1939, in time for the new school year. Articles in the *Cathedral Chronicle* of December 1938 and February 1939 provided details of the Nanson project:

This new Catholic addition to the district consists of two stone buildings, the first the Convent for the residence of the Sisters, the other the School building, which will also be used for Mass on Sundays and as a hall when the need arises. The Convent ... is a very fine building of stone which was quarried not far from the building site. The school promises to be big and spacious. It is to be hoped that its size will prove to be necessary by a 100 per cent attendance of the Catholic children of the district. The school will be conducted by the Presentation Sisters of the Northampton community.³⁶

During the Second World War, soldiers camped in the fields near the convent, and helped the Sisters by cutting firewood and mowing lawns.³⁷

In 1950, enrolments increased at the *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*, as the local government school had closed due to declining numbers. Although non-Catholic, the former public school pupils were welcomed, and classes were offered from Infants to Standard VI.³⁸

In the early 1950s, the Nanson school was modified for use as a church, with a sympathetic addition- a sanctuary and sacristy extended out from the west front of the building- constructed in the local stone and corrugated iron roofing of the original school-church.³⁹ When classes were held, the church seating was converted into desks and then changed back again for Sunday Mass. Approximately 30-40 students attended the school at this time, most being in the lower grades.⁴⁰

The late 1950s brought with it events which would have a long-lasting effect on the growth and development of the Chapman Valley, including most particularly towns such as Nanson. In 1956, the branch railway line from the Wokarina Junction to Yuna was closed, despite the fact that much money had been spent only the year previous on upgrades. The following year the Geraldton-Northampton Railway also closed. The cessation of the train passenger and goods services deprived the local communities along the line, including Nanson, of a very valuable service. The late 1950s also saw the decline in the mining industry and also the agricultural industry with the introduction of restrictive wheat quotas which forced many share farmers in particular to sell up and move out of the district.⁴¹

In 1963, a lighting plant was installed at *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* to enable the provision of amenities for the Sisters.⁴²

As a result of the events of the late 1950s, the local population began to drift away from Nanson. The effects of this on *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* enrolments were compounded by the introduction of

³⁶ Cited in Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, p. 189.

³⁷ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 268.

³⁸ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, pp. 269.

³⁹ Taylor, J. *Conservation Plan for Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson Church and Convent, Nanson*, July 2000, p. 10.

⁴⁰ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, p. 267.

⁴¹ Suba, Tanya and Callow, Bruce, 'European Site Survey: Chapman Valley' prepared for Landcorp, 1993, pp. 39-40.

⁴² *Cathedral Chronicle*, November 1963, p. 7.

government school buses to transport the children from outlying areas to Geraldton. As the numbers fell away, '...the Presentation Sisters were compelled in 1966 to close both the convent and the school and put their energies into other projects.⁴³

Following the school's closing, and the subsequent withdrawal of the Presentation Sisters, the convent was privately occupied.⁴⁴

In March 1989, the Presentation Sisters and former pupils and families returned to Nanson to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*. In 1991, the Sisters again returned to Nanson for a tree planting ceremony as part of the celebrations for the centenary of the Presentation Order in Western Australia.⁴⁵

In 2004, *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* is owned by the Geraldton Diocese of the Catholic Church. The convent building is leased to a local resident, while the church is used only occasionally for ecclesiastical functions.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson comprises two ecclesiastical buildings constructed in 1938 in Nanson, and designed by architect-priest Monsignor John Hawes, using locally quarried stone, brick and galvanized iron.

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson is located on the north side of the Chapman Valley Road (formerly known as the Geraldton-Yuna Road), approximately 0.4 km south of the former Nanson townsite and just southeast of the former Wokarina-Yuna railway line. The site is surrounded by a combination of pastoral land and native bushland, its nearest neighbour being the St Luke's Anglican Church, which is located on elevated ground across the road to the east. The Nanson-Howatharra Road is located to the north of the site, running parallel to the former railway line and eventually connecting with Chapman Valley Road just south of Nanson townsite. *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* is set back approximately 70 metres from the roads edge and is connected by way of a gravel driveway. The buildings are located in a wide clearing, with bushland growing to the south and east concealing views of the place from the road. A number of secondary buildings and structures are also located on the site, including a concrete and iron toilet block located 20 metres northwest of the school-church building, a corrugated-iron clad agricultural shed located northwest of the convent building, and a number of garden sheds located to the west of the convent building. Rainwater tanks are located on the western corners of both buildings, each mounted on circular concrete plinths.

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson are complimentary structures that stand alongside each other facing the main road. The buildings are located approximately 8 metres apart, with the school-church building positioned furthest north. The school-church is an attractive Inter-War Romanesque style stone building characterized by its robust form and

⁴³ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, p. 270.

⁴⁴ Taylor, J. *Conservation Plan for Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson Church and Convent, Nanson*, July 2000, p. 10.

⁴⁵ James R. Marchant, *Cork to Capricorn: A History of the Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991*, Perth, 1996, p. 270.

picturesque massing, and also featuring round-headed arch windows and prominent gables. A simple bellcote and cross adorn the east gable wall, which also features a large round window and a projecting entry portico. The gable roof is timber-framed and clad with corrugated iron in short length sheets. The entry portico has a flat roof with a concrete parapet. The building has coursed rubble stone walls with matching mortar, and a combination of brick and concrete quoining. A stone plinth, projecting approximately 40mm out from the wall, runs around the base of the building and is about 500mm high at the northwest corner. The plinth has a rendered concrete coping, weathered outwards. A small marble foundation stone is set into the east wall of the projecting entry portico, and reads "This stone was blessed and laid by The Most Rev. James P. O'Collins D.D. Bishop of Geraldton 29. Jan. 1939."

The building is oriented approximately east-west, with entry primarily from the east portico, although a secondary entry is located on the north elevation, opening into the sacristy. The entry portico is accessed from the north and south, with concrete steps and a concrete floor. The internal walls are plastered and painted and it features two small and narrow rectangular windows on the east wall. The portico shelters the main entry doors, which comprise a pair of timber-framed lined and ledged doors opening into the main body of the school-church. Internally, the school-church comprises three main spaces – the nave, the sanctuary, and the sacristy, which also includes the confessional. The nave is approximately 6 metres wide and 11 metres long and was originally occupied by two classrooms, the extent of these marked by the edge of the sanctuary. The nave has plastered and painted walls, a timber-paneled and chamfered suspended ceiling, and 150mm wide tongue & groove timber floorboards. Round-headed arch windows are located on the north and south walls of the nave, each window divided into three, with a horizontal sliding section to the lower section and fixed multi-pane lights to the upper sections. The nave is furnished with six rows of timber pews positioned either side of a central aisle. The pews themselves have an ornate cast-iron frame, with a timber seat, backing and kneel and are a feature of the interior.

The sanctuary and sacristy (added in the 1950s) are located at the western end of the nave, framed by a large archway. The sanctuary is raised above the floor of the nave by a stepped platform, and also separated by ornate timber communion rails. The marble altar table and tabernacle are located to the rear of the sanctuary, while the timber lectern is located to the front. A timber cross is mounted on the wall above the tabernacle, which displays a number of candlesticks and a Bishops crown. A doorway on the north wall of the inner sanctuary connects to the sacristy, a fairly large room which is plastered and painted throughout and has a carpet floor. A door on the east wall of the sacristy connects to the northern porch and also to the priest's confessional. A door on the north wall of the nave connects to the parishioner's confessional.

The school-church building is in good condition and has been well maintained. Externally, some repairs have been carried out to the stonework using a cement-rich mortar, which is visibly distinct from the original. The extensions added in the 1950s are well-designed and sympathetic with both the original form and materials of the early building.

The convent building is located to the south of the school-church building and comprises a single-storey stone, brick and iron building, set within a picturesque cottage garden and designed as an adaptation of the Australian homestead design, complete with encircling verandahs. The building has a simple

rectangular plan with a hipped corrugated iron roof, featuring simple Dutch gables and a tall masonry chimney.

The external walls of the convent building are constructed with coursed rubble and feature face-brick quoining framing the corners and openings. Windows are typically vertically-proportioned, timber-framed multi-pane sash windows with rendered sills, weathered outwards. Aluminum-framed flyscreens have been fixed to the outside of the window frames, and also to the external doors. The doors are typically timber-framed paneled and glazed doors and are located on the front (east) and rear (west) elevations. The front door is located centrally on the west elevation, flanked to the south by a window, and to the north, by a projecting canted bay which features a pair of narrow stained glass windows. The back door is also centrally located on the west elevation, with a second door opening from the kitchen onto the verandah, located to the north.

The verandahs are approximately 2.5 metres wide, with square timber verandah posts and a concrete floor. Timber lattice infill and shade-cloth has been used to partially enclose sections of the verandah on the north and east elevations and the northwest and southwest corners of the verandah have two in-built rooms, a bathroom and laundry clad with fibro.

A grassed yard featuring three mature eucalypts is located to the east of the convent building, forming a small backyard. The front yard, located to the west of the building is more formal, comprising a central stone pathway, flanked on either side by garden beds and lawn. A considerable sized rose garden is located on the south side of the front yard, and an orchard is located further south. A number of mature exotic trees are planted throughout the garden, and a statue of a religious icon is located just south of the house beneath a Robinia tree (*Robinia sp.*).

The convent has a simple plan comprising a central circulation corridor running east-west, with the kitchen, refectory and chapel (now a living room) located to the north, and three bedrooms and a parlour (now also a bedroom) located to the south. The rooms are typically generously proportioned with either carpet or linoleum flooring, plastered and painted walls and ceilings, and timber-framed paneled doors. The kitchen retains its original Metters stove, built into a masonry fireplace, while fireplace in the refectory features a moulded concrete and terrazzo surround, with an ornate timber mantle. Ornamentation throughout the rest of the interior is minimal, although the former chapel retains the canted bay with stained glass windows on its east wall.

The convent building and its grounds are generally in good condition and have been well maintained.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson, comprising two ecclesiastical buildings constructed in 1938 in Nanson, and designed by architect-priest Monsignor John Hawes, using locally quarried stone, brick and galvanized iron, may be compared to a number of other places which are similar in terms of age and function, and were also designed by Hawes.

A number of religious educational facilities designed by Hawes were established in the Mid-West in the Inter-War period, although not many on a similar scale to *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*. Of those that share characteristics, most date from Hawes' work in the 1930s, in particular, Our Lady Help of Christians Church-School (fmr) in Wiluna (1933), the *Pallottine Monastery*

in Tardun (1937), St Mary's Convent in Tardun (c. 1940), and the *Church of St Lawrence the Martyr in Bluff Point* (1937).

Our Lady Help of Christians Church School was constructed in Wiluna in 1933 and comprised a simple concrete block building with an iron roof, located immediately adjacent to a small weatherboard and iron convent building. As with *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*, the Church-School was designed for the Presentation Sisters to provide for the educational needs of the growing but isolated mining community in Wiluna. The building lacked the fine detailing of *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*, which is attributed to Hawes' lack of involvement in the building process⁴⁶, and is no longer extant.

Pallottine Monastery was constructed in Tardun in 1937 for the Christian Brothers, to supplement their primary missionary activities in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia. The design comprised a brick bungalow-style building with an eight-foot wide encircling verandah, very similar to the convent building at *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*. *Pallottine Monastery* accommodated two priests, six brothers, a guest room, a kitchen, a refectory, a chapel, a bathroom and a store, and although it can be considered an adaptation of the Australian homestead design, it also features a prominent entry portico and projecting chapel typical of Hawes' more elaborate church designs⁴⁷. The monastery also differs from the convent building because it has no immediate relationship to either a school or church building.

St Mary's Convent was also established in Tardun c. 1940 for the Sisters of Nazareth and like the *Pallottine Monastery* located on the nearby property, was another adaptation of the Australian homestead design, featuring a simple rectangular form with stone walls and encircling verandahs. Being a substantial two-storey building, St Mary's Convent is somewhat larger than the convent building at *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* and was designed in conjunction with a number of other buildings as the convent expanded.

Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson is a representative example of the type of religious educational facilities established in remote areas to address the needs of isolated Catholics.

The *Church of St Lawrence the Martyr* was constructed in 1937 in Bluff Point and comprised a stone church building with a tiled roof and round-headed windows in a modest Romanesque style. As well as stylistic similarities, Church of St Lawrence was similar to the school-church at *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson* as it was designed for future extension. The *Church of St Lawrence the Martyr* is no longer completely intact, the extensions carried out in the 1970s not being as sympathetic or successful as those carried out at *Convent and School-Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Nanson*.

The school-church building is representative of the Inter-War Romanesque style of architecture, of which, Monsignor John Hawes was a key practitioner.

13.4 KEY REFERENCES

John Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design – The Architecture of John Cyril Hawes 1876-1956*, University of Western Australia Press, 2000.

⁴⁶ John Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, page 135.

⁴⁷ John Taylor, *Between Devotion and Design*, page 167

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH
