



# 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.

### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* exhibits a finely resolved architectural design in the Inter-War Romanesque style. (Criterion 1.1)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* is an outstanding example of John Hawes' architectural style in his early Western Australian period. (Criterion 1.2)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* has a landmark quality with its' elevated position above the Town of Yalgoo. (Criterion 1.3)

### 11.2. HISTORIC VALUE

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* has a close association with a 'boom' pastoral period with increased economic activity in the Yalgoo area, and the need for education facilities that followed. (Criteria 2.1, & 2.2)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* has a close association with Father (later Dean, then Monsignor) John Hawes as both Architect for the place and the Parish Priest in the area at the time of construction. Hawes' life and works are prominent within the history of the Mid-West Region of Western Australia. Hawes was assisted in building the place by Hendry Jermy, who was responsible for many building works in the Yalgoo area. (Criterion 2.3)

### 11.3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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### 11.4. SOCIAL VALUE

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* has significant educational associations through the former convent school; and social, cultural, religious, and spiritual values to the Catholic Church and the Yalgoo community in general. (Criterion 4.1)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* contributes to the Yalgoo community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## **12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **12.1. RARITY**

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* is the smallest church design by the renowned Priest / Architect J.C. Hawes in his entire portfolio of work in Australia, the United Kingdom, the U.S.A., and the Bahamas; and is an important early example of Hawes' work in Western Australia from 1915 to 1939. (Criterion 5.1)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* illustrates a distinctive way of life that (with the decline of religious orders) is in danger of being lost from the State. (Criterion 5.2)

### **12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS**

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* is representative of J.C. Hawes' distinctive style of design. (Criterion 6.1)

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* demonstrates a way of life, function, design, and usage specific in Convents. (Criterion 6.2)

### **12.3 CONDITION**

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* is in good condition. In 1980/81 the Shire of Yalgoo undertook major restoration and reconstruction works. Since 1981 the Shire of Yalgoo has undertaken maintenance on a regular basis.

### **12.4 INTEGRITY**

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of integrity. It is no longer used as a chapel. The current use of the place as a tourist attraction and memorial to the work of the Dominican Sisters and to John Hawes is complimentary. The former Convent (and thus the purpose of the Chapel) is only indicated by remnant chimneys.

### **12.5 AUTHENTICITY**

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (fmr)* retains a moderate degree of authenticity.

Work in 1980/81 diminished the authenticity of the place. New materials were introduced to reconstruct roof tiling and tower cladding. In addition stained glass windows and some altar decorations have been lost. The archway connection to the former Convent has been abutted with an introduced narthex. This narthex has an introduced Gothic head timber door, an aluminium framed window in a low stone wall; and the bell tower adjacent also has a Gothic head timber door that documentary photographic evidence reveals does not appear to have been an original element in the fabric.

### 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by John Taylor, Architect.

#### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Yalgoo area was originally settled for pastoral use. Although early explorers and surveyors (A.C. Gregory 1846 and R. Austin 1854) traversed the area, no settlement was established until early in the 1890s.<sup>1</sup> The pastoral holdings were at this time in developmental stages, with sheep the main industry.

The Murchison Goldfield was proclaimed 24 September 1891.<sup>2</sup> The boundaries of the Murchison Goldfield were altered in February 1895 and the Yalgoo Goldfield declared.<sup>3</sup> With the major Murchison Goldfields finds in the 1890s a gold 'boom' period had occurred, although the Yalgoo gold region was perhaps relatively marginal in comparison to areas further east. The fabulously rich Emerald Reward Mine was found in late 1892, and by 1900 the population in the Yalgoo townsite was 200, with 1300 in the district - the majority engaged in the mining industry. The Mullewa to Yalgoo railway line was opened in July 1896.<sup>4</sup> Around the turn of the century, however, mining started a steady decline; poor 'shows', drought, and occasional typhoid outbreaks saw the closure of several mines. From 1903 to 1908, the gold production from the town steadily declined with the resultant closure of the 'Emerald' in 1908.<sup>5</sup> After World War One, the mining receded even further in relative importance for Yalgoo when a pastoral 'boom' period occurred.<sup>6</sup>

The Geraldton Diocese of the Catholic Church in Western Australia was formed in 1898, and the first Bishop appointed at that time was William Bernard Kelly. Kelly based his early activities in Cue rather than Geraldton from 1900 to 1910, as he recognised the importance of the Murchison Goldfields in the region.

One of Kelly's main aims was to set up Catholic schools throughout the Diocese. As this area developed, two orders of teaching nuns (Dominican and Irish Presentation) were invited by Kelly to contribute to the Catholic school system. Over the ensuing years the Bishop dispersed the Dominican and the Irish Presentation Sisters throughout the Murchison region.<sup>7</sup> In 1921 Kelly asked the Dominicans to start a Convent at Yalgoo.

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<sup>1</sup> *Yalgoo Heritage Trail* Heritage Committee of Western Australia, 1989, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Heydon, P.R. *Gold on the Murchison*. Hesperian Press, 1986, p.1, citing the *Government Gazette* 24 September 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Palmer, Alex. *Yalgoo Lap Industries*, 1985, Reprinted 1989, p.3, citing the *Government Gazette* 8 February 1895.

<sup>4</sup> *Yalgoo Heritage Trail* op. cit., pp.2-3.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.21.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*. See also Marchant James, R.; *Cork to Capricorn. A History of The Presentation Sisters in Western Australia 1891-1991* Congregation of the Presentation Sisters of Western Australia, Mosman Park, 1996, pp.129-168.

Originally from Dublin, in 1871, the Dominican Sisters had founded a base for their Order in Dunedin, South Island, New Zealand. Responding to a request made by Bishop Kelly to help establish Catholic schools in the Geraldton Diocese, the Sisters arrived in Geraldton on 6 June 1899. The Dominican Sisters immediately took over the school in Greenough and, in 1901, established a base in Dongara, from which they were to work for the next seventy years.<sup>8</sup> The Dominican Sisters also established convents at Cue (1899), Leonora (1903), Gwalia (1904), Day Dawn (1905), Meekatharra (1911), Three Springs (1915) and Mingenew (1932).<sup>9</sup>

The task of organising the new convent building at Yalgoo fell to Father John Cyril Hawes, at that time the Parish Priest of both Mullewa and Yalgoo. Hawes had not only the responsibility for organising the building (as with Geraldton's St Francis Xavier Cathedral), he assisted in procuring the land and the finance, he designed the building, and even helped with the construction. The position chosen for the Convent was on Henty Street, on the hill overlooking the town. It was land not included originally in the town survey, and had been part of the old Emerald Gold Mine.<sup>10</sup>

In October of 1921, Hawes had to suspend construction work on his own Parish Church at Mullewa to begin work on the Dominican Convent and Chapel of St Hyacinth<sup>11</sup> at Yalgoo.<sup>12</sup> Hawes employed the services of Hendry Jermy - a building contractor in Yalgoo (Jermy was to later assist with the forming of sophisticated arch forms and a revolving dome template for the Hawes designed church at Mullewa in 1924), and most of the materials for the new convent were acquired by relocating the old convent from the near derelict Goldfields town of Day Dawn.<sup>13</sup>

Jermy also built a service station at Yalgoo in 1922<sup>14</sup>, and various works at the local homesteads Melangata, Noongal, Carlaminda, Bunnawarra, and

<sup>8</sup> Bourke, D.F. *The History of the Catholic Church in Western Australia 1829-1979*, Vanguard Service Print, Perth, 1979, pp. 172

<sup>9</sup> Abbott, L., 'The History of the Dominican Sisters in Western Australia', History Thesis, Graylands Teachers College, 1963

<sup>10</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.43

<sup>11</sup> St Hyacinth (born 1185, died 1257) was a priest from Silesia, which was a part of Poland. In c.1218, Hyacinth went to Rome and, with three others, received the habit from St. Dominic in the convent of Santa Sabina after a novitiate of only six months. The four journeyed back to Poland, with Hyacinth appointed superior of the mission, preaching the gospel and receiving new members to their order. He arrived in Cracow in 1231, having carried the gospel to 'the pagan' countries in the North (Prussia, Pomerania, the Baltic, Denmark, Sweden, Norway & Russia-as far as the Black Sea and the Aegean). In 1233, Hyacinth left Cracow to visit the convents which he had founded and travelled even further, visiting China and Tibet. He returned to Cracow in 1257. Ecclesiastical historians called him the Apostle of the North and he is thought to have been one of the greatest travellers of his time. (www.catholic.org)

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, John 'Conservation Plan for The Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel and the Holy Apostles St Peter and St Paul and "the Priesthouse"' Mullewa, Western Australia, for The Our Lady of Mt Carmel Parish Council, January 1996, p.10.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from J.C. Hawes at Yalgoo to the Mother Prioress of The Dominican Sisters dated 11 September 1921, courtesy Mrs R. Marchant James and the Dominican Sisters Doubleview; Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.43.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.22.

Barnong are included in his 'portfolio of work'.<sup>15</sup> Jermy left Yalgoo in 1927, and later worked at Perth, Wiluna, Darwin, and Exmouth. H. C. Jermy died at Perth on 15 May 1944.<sup>16</sup>

Hawes wrote from Yalgoo on the 11th September 1921 to the Mother Prioress of the Dominican Sisters at Dongara:

Dear Mother Prioress

Things are going splendidly here, the people are all most enthusiastic about the Convent, we raised £40 this morning after mass in a couple of minutes - & the Committee are going to send round subscription lists. The Ladies have already got a 'Popular Girl' competition in full swing in connection with the bazaar to be held in Race Week at the end of November. I wrote to Mr Troy to see about getting us the grant of land - but I have not heard anything from him as yet. I have secured the services of a first-rate young carpenter - Harry Jermy - to erect the building - he is a man whose heart is in all his work.

I enclose a rough sketch plan of the plan on which I suggest erecting the old Convent from Day Dawn - (coloured blue) - with space left for the new stone Convent, with its verandas, to be built in front (coloured red) : - so that any suggestions as to alterations & improvements that occur to you, you could point out to me.

With kindest regards

Yours sincerely in Dmo J. C. Hawes.

It is believed Hawes had procured his own Presbytery at Mullewa in the same fashion by relocating a house from Day Dawn in circa 1919.<sup>17</sup> The Yalgoo Court House (a museum since 1973) had been erected at Day Dawn in 1904 and brought to Yalgoo in 1921 to replace the original Court House which had been destroyed in a storm.<sup>18</sup>

It was a common practice in the Goldfields towns to relocate buildings as mines were 'worked out', and redundant timber framed and iron clad buildings (and tents) were dismantled and moved to new locations. Whilst Jermy and his men were working on the Convent, Hawes was busy constructing the Chapel alongside. As Jermy was principally a carpenter, it is likely he completed the roof structure and tower framing/cladding with Hawes.

The following are extracts from letters Hawes wrote to the Mother Prioress of the Dominicans in Dongara<sup>19</sup>:

(Oct. 1921) Everything here is going ahead well. I think the popular girl competition and the bazaar will realise a good sum. Our water scheme may not be ready but can make shift with rain water tanks and carting water up.

(Jan. 1922) I very much regret to say that we find now that we cannot possibly be ready for the Sisters by the end of next week. Mr Jermy has been doing his very best

<sup>15</sup> Material produced for the Yalgoo Centenary in 1996 by Mrs Lorna Morrissey of Noongal Station, and still on display at the Shire of Yalgoo offices in January 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Telephone conversations between John Taylor and Harry Jermy (son of Hendry Jermy), 3 February 1997, and 12 February 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Telephone conversation 1995 John Taylor with Mr Bert Keefe formerly of Mullewa; site conversation John Taylor with Mullewa Parish Council representatives Mrs Barbara Arnold and Mr Kevin Weir 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.36.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in part in Palmer, Alex. op. cit., pp.43-44, citing letters held by the Dominican Sisters at their Convent in Doubleview.

and we have been at it early and late, heedless of the temperature of (48 degrees Celsius) some days. Mrs Rodan made out a list for me so that there will be something more than a billy can and one frying pan. I hope the Sisters will not mind doing without chests of drawers and wash stands until Mr Jermy has time to make them.

A great sadness and interruption that occurred whilst the Yalgoo Convent was being built was that the Geraldton Diocese's leader and patriarch, Bishop Kelly, passed away. On 26 December 1921, Bishop Kelly died at St John of God Hospital in Perth aged 64 years. Kelly had been an important guiding figure for Hawes, and Hawes held him in great respect. Hawes later designed a memorial to the Bishop which was placed on Kelly's tomb in the St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Geraldton.<sup>20</sup>

The Convent opened in February 1922 with 26 students, under the watchful care of three foundresses, M. Dominica Murphy, S. Reginald Rice, and S. Evangelist Graham.<sup>21</sup> The Convent eventually closed its doors at the end of 1949<sup>22</sup> because of a lack of pupils due to a fall in population in the district - mainly due to a further decline in mining. The building was occupied as a residence by several Yalgoo families for a year or two until it was sold. The Convent was then dismantled, and the material used to build a shearing shed on a station property.<sup>23</sup> The Yalgoo Shire had considered restoring the Chapel as early as 1965.<sup>24</sup> Tenders were called for works by the Shire of Yalgoo in 1977, but work did not proceed at that time as financial grant aid was not available. The Shire eventually decided to proceed unaided, however the Ministry of Tourism was noted as a potential funding source on a 'one for one' basis.<sup>25</sup> The Yalgoo Shire spent \$24,000<sup>26</sup> through 1980/81 to restore the Chapel. It was reopened by Sir Charles Court on Sunday, 7 June 1981.<sup>27</sup>

## 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

A convent may be defined as: *n* religious community esp. of women living together; its house.<sup>28</sup>

A chapel may be defined as: *n* place of Christian worship, esp. attached to institution or private house, ...<sup>29</sup>

*Dominican Convent Chapel of St Hyacinth (former)* is generally approached from Henty Street (from the south side). The entry to the Chapel formerly faced to the east into the attached Convent which has

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, John, research notes for unpublished manuscript on Hawes' Architecture, citing *The Record* Newspaper of 11 November 1922, p.4.

<sup>21</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.45; A further list of Sisters who taught at the Convent is on page 47.

<sup>22</sup> *The Cathedral Chronicle* August 1980, front page; Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.45 says the convent closed in 1950 - the conflicting dates probably relate to actual school years.

<sup>23</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.45.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p.36; citing Shire Minutes of 1965.

<sup>25</sup> *The Cathedral Chronicle* August 1980 front page.

<sup>26</sup> Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.36.

<sup>27</sup> *The West Australian* Advertisement 16th May 1981, (no page no. noted) in National Trust of Australia (W.A.) files; commemorative plaque on building; and Palmer, Alex. op. cit., p.36. Lap Industries 1985. Reprinted 1989.

<sup>28</sup> The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary 2nd Edition 1989.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*.

been demolished. The new entry door and 'narthex' has been constructed in a manner to allow viewing of the interior of the Chapel through windows without access being gained to the interior of the building.

Adjacent to the entry door is the door to gain access to the bell tower. As for the entry door, this Gothic head door appears to be an introduced feature from 1981. The tower is constructed with a stone base and weatherboard clad timber framed shaft. The shaft is capped by a 'corrugated iron' clad pyramid roof and a timber crucifix. The roof has a subtle change of pitch just above the gutter line that Hawes also employed on his tower at the 1919 Sacred Heart Convent at Northampton.

Above the narthex roof constructed in 1980/1981, and in the east end wall of the original chapel construction is a cement tracery window of distinctive design - Hawes used a similar design in the east window of his Mullewa Church, at the Nun's Tribune of the St Francis Xavier Cathedral in Geraldton, and on his unbuilt design for the Chapel to be attached to the (built) Sacred Heart Convent in Northampton. With a little imagination one can read the initials J, C, and H (John Cyril Hawes) in the cement tracery.

A plaque affixed to the wall beside the entry door states:

**ST. HYACINTH**

**DOMINICAN CONVENT CHAPEL**

**THIS CHAPEL, BUILT BY DEAN HAWES IN 1919**

**AND RESTORED BY THE SHIRE OF YALGOO AS**

**AN ENDURING TRIBUTE TO THE HISTORY OF**

**THE DISTRICT, WAS OPENED BY THE**

**HON. SIR CHARLES COURT K.C.M.G., O.B.E., M.L.A.**

**PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SUNDAY 7TH JUNE 1981**

The plaque is not entirely accurate. Hawes was made a 'Dean' in 1932, and 'Monsignor' in December 1937. At the time of construction Hawes' correct title was 'Father Hawes'; and the place was built by Hawes with assistance from Hendry Jermy and others in 1921/22.

The walls of the building are constructed with local stone. Each end wall is a parapet capped gable wall with a crucifix at the apex. The side walls are each punctuated by two Romanesque arch head windows, and have Hawes' detailed timber louvre and internal shutter details developed from his previous experience (1909-1911) in the Bahamas.

The west-end wall has cement rendered buttresses which documentary photographic evidence reveals were constructed of concrete block. Concrete block was also used to form the window reveals. A Marseilles pattern terra cotta tile is used for roof cladding. The ceiling is lined on the rake from pitching height each side before the lining material is fixed flat under the roof framing collar ties. A metal tie-rod binds the east and west walls above the flat ceiling, and protrudes out of terra-cotta ventilators to 'S' shaped plates at high level in each end wall.

Internally the floor is of concrete, the walls cement rendered and painted, and the altar located on a raised floor to the west end of the Chapel. Hawes generally preferred altars to the east end, and this is slightly unusual. Hawes' original sketches for the Convent and Chapel showed the Chapel on the east end of the Convent in a more permanent stone structure to be built later; and thus an east altar would have been preferred in his original concept. The altar design itself is extremely similar to (and continues from) Hawes' design for the St Andrew's Church at Wemyss on Long Island in the Bahamas (1910).

The statues now present on the altar and wall projections differ from those shown in photographic evidence; and the (hand painted?) stained glass has been lost to the feature window over the altar in the west wall. The interior is now painted. Early photographic evidence (1922) indicates an unpainted sand finish render on the interior walls. There are cement moulded holy water niche and projections on the interior walls characteristic of Hawes hand-made tracery work.

At the rear of the site is a series of steps descending into a circular stairwell which is now largely filled in. The Dominican Sisters have indicated these steps formerly went down into a replica of the Holy Sepulchre with an altar inside. The Sisters described that there was a statue of Jesus on a ledge, and a large cross outside the excavation on a stone cairn. The timber framed Convent to which the Chapel was attached is now only indicated by two stone chimneys, and a concrete verandah floor.

In 1980/81, the Shire of Yalgoo undertook the major restoration and reconstruction works on the Chapel, and since then the Shire of Yalgoo has undertaken maintenance on a regular basis. Keys to gain access to the fenced area around the Chapel and the building itself are available from the Shire of Yalgoo Office and tourists and other interested viewers are invited to make a nominal donation for entry.

### **13. 3 REFERENCES**

Taylor, John. 'The Art and Architecture of John Cyril Hawes - The Priest/Architect.' unpublished manuscript.

### **13. 4 FURTHER RESEARCH**

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