



## REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

### 11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in September, 1991 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

#### 11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* demonstrates high aesthetic characteristics. The Old Colonial Norman Revival church set among the gravestones and peppermint trees is valued by the people of Busselton for many reasons, one of which is its aesthetic quality. (Criterion 1.1)

The stained glass windows are excellently designed and executed. (Criterion 1.2)

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the landscape. (Criterion 1.3)

The neighbouring Rectory and Community Centre combine with *St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* to form a precinctual and cultural environment. (Criterion 1.4)

#### 11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

*St Mary's Anglican Church* is one of the oldest churches in the State. (Criterion 2.1)

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is associated with the founding and development of the townsite of Busselton. (Criterion 2.2)

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* has close connections with the founding families of Busselton, such as the Bussells and the Molloyes, who not only raised the funds for its construction, but actively helped to build it. (Criterion 2.3)

#### 11.3 SCIENTIFIC VALUE

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#### 11.4 SOCIAL VALUE

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is highly valued by the local community as a place of worship, and for its aesthetic qualities and historical associations. (Criterion 4.1)

Its long history and association with the founding families of Busselton contribute to the community's sense of place. (Criterion 4.2)

## 12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

### 12.1. RARITY

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is unique to the area and the church is one of the oldest churches in the State. As such, *St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is highly significant. (Criterion 5.1)

### 12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard*, by means of its original construction and continued use, demonstrates the importance of the Christian faith in general and Anglicanism in particular to the community. (Criterion 6.2)

### 12.3 CONDITION

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is in good condition, although some of the gravestones are out of plumb and weathering badly.

### 12.4 INTEGRITY

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* has high integrity. The original intention of the place is intact although it appears that burials no longer take place. A memorial wall and a garden for the internment of ashes have been built in recent times.

### 12.5 AUTHENTICITY

Most of the graves appear to be in their original state, as is the bell tower. Some of the older headstones have been repaired, removed or replaced. The church has been renovated in recent years, and the work included re-shingling the roof, repairing the external masonry and internal plaster, and replacing the original stained glass. This has been done in a manner sympathetic to the original. The authenticity of *St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is high.

## 13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary evidence has been compiled by Elise de Munck, B.A. The physical evidence has been compiled by John Loreck, Architect.

### 13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

*St Mary's Anglican Church*, erected as a place of worship by the early settlers of the Vasse district, was opened in 1845.<sup>1</sup> It is situated on the ocean side of the Vasse River, about seven kilometres from its mouth, a position influenced by the planning of the government townsite of Busselton there.<sup>2</sup> A substantial stone building, with narrow windows in the Norman style, its construction was very much a community effort.<sup>3</sup>

The Vasse district, 200km southwards of Perth, was settled in the late 1830s by the Bussells, Molloyes and others who moved there from Augusta. The principal townsite of the district, situated on the shores of Geographe Bay near the Vasse River, was named Busselton after the pioneer family. By 1841,

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<sup>1</sup> *Inquirer*, 30 April 1845.

<sup>2</sup> Wollaston, Rev J.R. *Wollaston's Journals 1842-1844*, vol 2, edited by G. Bolton, H. Vose, A. Watson & S. Lewis (UWA Press, Nedlands 1992), p.199.

<sup>3</sup> 'Church in Western Australia' *The Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1846, p.136.

it was felt that the increasing population of the region warranted the erection of a church.<sup>4</sup>

The initial financing of this project consisted almost entirely of contributions raised by friends and relatives of the Bussell family in England, especially cousins, Capel Carter and Frances Bowker.<sup>5</sup> By October 1843, funds sufficient for erecting walls and a roof had been amassed, and it was resolved to proceed.<sup>6</sup> Trustees appointed were John G. Bussell, John Molloy and Henry Chapman.<sup>7</sup> It is thought that Reverend John Wollaston and Bussell designed the building as an adaption of an early Norman architectural style based on Winchester College Chapel.<sup>8</sup> Plans and estimates were prepared by Mr F. Brabazon Forsayth.<sup>9</sup>

The foundation stone was laid with due ceremony by Mrs Frances Bussell on 4 March 1844. The inscription reads:

To the honour and praise of Almighty GOD,  
The foundation stone of this Sanctuary,  
to be erected with funds collected by friends of the  
Bussell family, (of Cattle Chosen, in this district),  
for the use of the members of the Church of England,  
was laid by Frances Louisa, relict of the Rev. William Marchant Bussell,  
on the 4th day of March, 1844.<sup>10</sup>

The settlers quarried stone, cut and carted timber and shared in the construction work.<sup>11</sup> John Bussell made all the frames on which the arches were built and donated the timber which, with the assistance of a sawyer named Balschin, he pit-sawed himself. George Blechynden, the district carpenter, also gave some months labour free of charge.<sup>12</sup> Altogether, the construction costs amounted to £300.<sup>13</sup>

The church was opened on 11 April 1845, even though the interior was incomplete. At that time the floor was of beaten earth. The building was named St Mary's after a church of that name in Portsea, England, where William Marchant Bussell had once been curate.<sup>14</sup> The ceremony was conducted by Reverend Wollaston who also performed the first baptism in the church that day.<sup>15</sup>

In a letter to England dated 9 November 1846, Wollaston states:

appropriate seats of uniform pattern, open after the ancient mode, are now making of our very handsome and durable jarrah wood (miscalled mahogany) which, when oiled, needs no paint. A stone font also has just been finished, and will shortly be

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- 4 Jennings, R. *Busselton, Outstation on the Vasse 1830-1850*, (Shire of Busselton, Busselton, 1983), p.216.
- 5 Wollaston, Rev J.R. *Wollaston's Journals 1842-1844*, vol 2, edited by G. Bolton, H. Vose, A. Watson & S. Lewis (UWA Press, Nedlands 1992), p.199 and National Trust of Australia (WA) 'St Mary's - Busselton' BL - PR5536/3.
- 6 'Church in Western Australia' *The Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1846, p.136.
- 7 *Inquirer*, 13 March 1844.
- 8 Reed, T.T. *Historic Churches of Australia* (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1976), p.82.
- 9 'Church in Western Australia' *The Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1846, p.136.
- 10 *Inquirer*, 13 March 1844.
- 11 'Church in Western Australia' *The Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1846, p.136.
- 12 Jennings, R. *Busselton, Outstation on the Vasse 1830-1850*, (Shire of Busselton, Busselton, 1983), p.219.
- 13 'Church in Western Australia' *The Illustrated London News*, 21 February 1846, p.136.
- 14 *Busselton Margaret Times*, 4 November 1971, p.11.
- 15 *South Western News*, 8 April 1932.

fixed at the west end, near the door. The Society's £20 I have requested my friends at home to expend in windows, ready glazed to fit into frames, of which accurate dimensions have been sent ... At present we have calico in place of glass,<sup>16</sup>

Windows, which came out of a church in Oxford, were eventually presented by Oxford contemporaries of John Bussell's.<sup>17</sup> The building is generally represented to have been completed by 1848 and it was consecrated by Bishop Short on 2 November 1848.<sup>18</sup>

In 1859 a harmonium was installed. In 1902, a bell and bell tower were erected. A vestry, added as a gift from Sir Winthrop Hackett, was consecrated on 14 October 1906, superceding an earlier, less permanent vestry.<sup>19</sup> In 1909 a jarrah pulpit was presented to the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Molloy. A porch erected in memory of John G. Bussell, another of the original trustees, was dedicated on 14 September 1924.<sup>20</sup>

In 1958, the church required major repairs and renovations. The rector at that time, Reverend Canon J.J. Tredwell, recorded that:

...the floor as far as the chancel was taken up. Beneath the flooring was the original beaten-earth floor which served for a year or two until the pioneers found time to lay the timber floor. Although there was space of less than six inches between this earthen surface and the flooring boards; and although no provision was made for underfloor ventilation, the pit-sawn floor boards, after 110 years of service, were found to be perfectly sound and were re-laid... The roofing timbers, which the pioneers had cut out of the bush with hand tools, and which is one of the finest examples of early colonial timber work in this State, were also found to be in perfect condition... Little except the patching of deteriorated plaster was necessary for the walls.<sup>21</sup>

During the 1970s, many of the original glass windows were replaced with stained glass windows donated by descendants of early pioneering families in Busselton.<sup>22</sup> The bell tower was also renovated.<sup>23</sup> In 1972, the original shingles were replaced with aluminium tiles.<sup>24</sup> Ten years later the church underwent an extensive restoration programme at a cost of \$24 000. This included re-surfacing interior walls, re-wiring, improving guttering and drainage, renewing exterior walls, woodwork, foundations and re-painting.<sup>25</sup> At some point during these years, the pulpit was removed from its original base, which was approximately 1.5 metres high, and lowered to be more on level with the congregation.<sup>26</sup>

The graveyard at St Mary's has always been an important aspect of the place. Burials occurred before the erection of the church. Mrs Georgiana Molloy, who died in childbirth in April 1843, was buried beneath the church site and

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16 Burton, Canon A. *History of St Mary's, Busselton* (St Mary's Ladies' Guild, Busselton, 1940), p.20.

17 *South Western News*, 8 April 1932.

18 National Trust of Australia (WA) 'St Mary's - Busselton' BL - PR5536/3.

19 John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

20 Ibid.

21 Reed, T.T. *Historic Churches of Australia* (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1976), p.82-83.

22 *Busselton-Margaret Times*, 22 march 1973 and Reed, T.T. *Historic Churches of Australia* (Macmillan, Melbourne, 1976), p.83.

In 2002, some of the original windows are located at 'Lockeville', and one is on display at the Butter Factory Museum. (John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402)

23 John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

24 *Busselton-Margaret Times*, 10 August 1989, p.1.

25 *The Anglican Messenger*, August 1983; taken from Busselton Historical Society File 27A, p.63.

26 John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

Mrs Frances Bussell, who died in June 1845, was interred in a vault beneath the chancel step. Many of the founding settlers of Busselton are buried in the graveyard.<sup>27</sup> In April 1984, a memorial garden at St Mary's was blessed at a service on Palm Sunday. The garden was designed with a wall of Donnybrook stone for the placement of memorial plaques, a necessary addition because of the increase in cremations rather than burials.<sup>28</sup>

In the early 1980s, a wood carving of the Madonna and Child was donated to the church to be used as a cover for the font.<sup>29</sup>

In 1989, a new roof consisting of 10 400 sheoak shingles at a cost of \$10 000 replaced the aluminium tiles which were leaking.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1990s, the church hall was removed from the site and transported to 'Lockeville', at Wonnerup.<sup>31</sup>

In 1998, the grave of Alfred Pickmore Bussell and his wife Ellen had its headstone replaced with small, oblong, horizontal slabs in a modern style, with the cracked original headstone buried beneath them. Ann Bryan's headstone, damaged by Cyclone Alby in 1978, was subsequently repaired, but by the late 1990s it had been further damaged, and the original headstone was mislaid. In 1998, a replacement oblong horizontal headstone with inlaid details was erected over her grave.<sup>32</sup> The broken pieces of the headstone of pioneer John Herring are stored in the vault of the church.<sup>33</sup>

In 2002, it was noted that the interior walls of the church had recently received a gyprock and plaster finish, to approximately window height, to address problems of rising damp<sup>34</sup>

In 2002, *St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* remains in use as a place of worship and a cemetery.

### 13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* consists of a single-storey stone building with a shingled roof. It is located to the south and west of a small graveyard. There are about thirty visible graves dating from about 1840 and a modern low wall for memorial plaques. A timber bell tower is located in the north-west corner of the graveyard.

*St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* is located at the north-east corner of Queen Street and Peel Terrace, Busselton. About 100 metres to the south is the Vasse River and adjoining park. To the north is Busselton Mitsubishi and St. Mary's Community Centre. (At the time of this assessment, the Centre was under construction and about to be completed.) To the east is the Rectory and to the west, opposite Queen Street, is Victoria Park.

With the exception of some concrete paving south and west of the church and some new brick paving being laid at the time of this assessment as part of the

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<sup>27</sup> 'W.A. Country Cemeteries, Headstones and Registers' recorded on microfiche H/S St Mary's Anglican Cemetery, Busselton, 1841-1967, Series 1, 5, Battye Library, transcribed by Elise de Munck and *South-Western News*, 8 April 1932.

<sup>28</sup> *Busselton-Margaret Times*, 12 April 1984, p.10.

<sup>29</sup> John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

<sup>30</sup> *Busselton-Margaret Times*, 10 August 1989, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

<sup>32</sup> John Bussell, letter to the Heritage Council, 28 November 2002, on HCWA file P0402

<sup>33</sup> John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

<sup>34</sup> John Bussell, letter to Judy Edwards MLA, 30 October 2002, on HCWA file P0402

works to the community centre, the grounds of *St Mary's Anglican Church and Graveyard* are grassed. The numerous mature peppermint trees are informally and probably naturally spaced and compliment the irregularly spaced graves and the Old Colonial Norman Revival church to produce a place of considerable aesthetic quality.

St. Mary's church was built in three stages. The nave and sanctuary, aligned with the long axis running east-west, with the sanctuary at the east end, were completed in 1848. A vestry was added to the southern part of the sanctuary in 1906, and the porch built in 1924, located near the south-west corner of the nave. All were built in an Old Colonial Norman Revival style. The porch and flat roofed vestry give the originally symmetrical church an asymmetry and irregularity totally appropriate to the style.

The construction of St. Mary's church consists of limestone walls, which are plastered internally full height and rendered externally up to height of about 1.8m. Four metre high integrated piers and buttresses are rendered in their entirety. The hammer-beamed roof is lined internally with timber and clad externally with timber shingles. Windows and doors have semi-circular heads. Above the openings are hood moulds, which are generally semi-circular although some have a very slight pointed arch. There are two groupings of three lancet windows; these are located at the east of the sanctuary and vestry. The hood mould to the three sanctuary windows has a curved shape like that of curly brackets. The vestry windows have a hood mould that is largely horizontal.

The porch (or narthex) is approached from the east through an arched entrance and has four small stained glass windows that depict the dioceses to which the church has belonged; Canterbury, Calcutta, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Bunbury. The timber floor has been covered in vinyl tiles. An arched entrance to the west side has been sealed off internally by means of a built in noticeboard, although externally the original doors are still in place. A bench top with cupboards underneath has been installed along the south wall in recent times, and is used for the display of newsletters and the like. A large speaker with surface mounted wiring is located above the arched entrance to the nave.

The nave is rectangular in plan. The timber pews are arranged in two rows, with a cross aisle linking the porch to the main central aisle, which leads to the sanctuary. An organ is located at the back of the church, in the north-west corner. A pulpit is in the north-east corner, near the sanctuary. A modern retractable screen for the projection of hymns has been fixed in the front south-west corner. No projection equipment was visible at the time of this assessment. The flooring to the aisles consists of vinyl tiles. In the main aisle, carpet has been fixed over the tiles. There are five main stained glass windows to the nave, three to the north and two to the south and they depict the Five Glorious Mysteries of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A small stained glass rose window with a geometrical pattern is centrally located in the western gable.

A low timber communion rail separates the nave from the sanctuary, which has a carpeted floor, a large timber altar table and three stained glass windows, which depict Christ in the centre, Saint Mary to the left and Saint John to the right. These three windows are by the same artist as the five nave windows and all are excellently conceived and executed. A modern safe to house the communion elements is set into one wall of the sanctuary.

The vestry has a separate external entrance in the south wall, and a door leading on to the sanctuary. In addition, there is an arched window between the two which appears to have the original glazing. In recent times the vestry has been fitted out with laminated plastic benches and cupboards.

The graves generally consist of marble headstones about 1 metre high, with many having a wrought iron grave surround, or a flat stone slab over the grave itself. A timber picket grave surround has been used for one grave and another has an inscribed vertical timber board rather than a gravestone.

The bell tower was built in 1902 and consists of six main and two minor timber posts arranged in a square plan shape. These posts lean inwards to support a platform, over which the bell is housed. Above the bell is a steeply pitched pyramid shaped timber shingled roof. The height of the bell tower is about 10 metres.

To the north-east of the graveyard is a low limestone wall about 1m high and 6 metres long, to which commemorative plaques are fitted. Ashes are interred in the garden adjacent to the wall. The wall was built in 1984.

### **13.3 REFERENCES**

No key references.