



**HERITAGE
COUNCIL**
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES

Permanent Entry

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)

- 4.1.2 Making suburbs
- 7.6.6 Providing services and welfare
- 8.6.1 Worshipping together
- 8.6.2 Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies
- 8.6.4 Making places for worship

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 104 Land allocation and subdivision
- 404 Community services and utilities
- 406 Religion

11.1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is an early, inner suburban, Western Australian example of a simple, economically constructed parish church, subsequently extended, creating greater complexity of form. (Criterion 1.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is a simple rendition of the Victorian Romanesque style, with its design character derived from a need for simplicity on the part of its then inexperienced designer J.J Talbot Hobbs. Its simple design reflects the economic and social conditions of the developing first suburbs of Perth in the years before and immediately after the discovery of gold in Western Australia. (Criterion 1.2)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate has landmark qualities, having been deliberately located on a commanding site on a corner block of rising ground. (Criterion 1.3)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is surrounded by lawns and gardens with mature trees, which, contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the streetscape. Although the mid-late 20th century rectory and hall replacing earlier structures are of no individual aesthetic merit, they collectively form a significant cultural, religious and social precinct. (Criterion 1.4)

11.2 HISTORIC VALUE

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

The location upon which *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* was built was a very commanding one, being on a corner block of rising ground, from which a good view was obtained, demonstrating its prominence in the community at that time. When it was constructed, *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* provided residents of Highgate with what was then considered to be one of the prettiest churches in the colony. (Criterion 2.1)

The land near to where *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* was built was the site where the congregation and neighbourhood of Highgate Hill celebrated open-air services until *St Alban's Church, Highgate* was constructed. (Criterion 2.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate was the first parish church built on the outskirts of Perth, at a time when there was a considerable population living on the outskirts of the city at the northern extremity of Beaufort Street. Its construction recognised a change in the movement and settlement of people northward from the city. (Criterion 2.2)

J.J. Talbot Hobbs (later Sir J.J. Talbot Hobbs) designed the original church (1889) and the enlargement (1898). Hobbs, then new to Western Australia, subsequently became well-known as an architect, soldier and community leader, and his later buildings are a significant component of the built heritage of Western Australia. *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* is important as one of his first church designs and one of his earliest surviving buildings. (Criterion 2.3)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is highly valued by the local and wider community as the place of religious observances for over a century. Throughout its history it has not only been a place for Anglican worship, but a space in which community gatherings were held and significant rites of passage (baptisms, marriages and deaths) were celebrated. (Criterion 4.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate continues to be significant as a place of worship for the local Anglican community, a focus of community life and a centre of provision of social services to disadvantaged people. (Criterion 4.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is valued for its landmark status. The church is a well known and longstanding landmark, and a social centre associated with thousands of lives. It contributes significantly to the community's sense of place. It is a link with the suburb's past, and a valued site on Beaufort Street. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is rare as one of the earliest buildings designed by J.J. Talbot Hobbs and his earliest surviving church. (Criterion 5.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is rare as a small stone church in the Victorian Romanesque style and the only example of such in the Office of Heritage database from the 1880s. (Criterion 5.1)

12.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

Saint Alban's Church, with its adjacent modern replacement hall and rectory, is representative of religious and social precincts as developed in inner-suburban locations in the late 19th and early-mid 20th century. (Criterion 6.1)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate represents the growth of religious and community activity into newly developing inner suburbs of Perth at the end of the 19th century, the growth of Anglicanism, and the provision of religious and community services beyond the city of Perth to serve a spreading population. (Criterion 6.2)

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate demonstrates the ongoing aspects of the organisation and practice of religion in Western Australian suburban communities since the late 19th century. (Criterion 6.2)

12.3 CONDITION

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is in sound condition although there is some spalling and delamination of walls, and in 2003 inappropriate repainting techniques and materials were being applied. The continued use of the place as a church has maintained it in fair general condition.

12.4 INTEGRITY

The continued use of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* has ensured it has maintained a high degree of integrity, despite changing styles of religious observance and community activity. Its use is likely to continue in the future.

12.5 AUTHENTICITY

The early fabric of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* (including the extensions of 1898) is still largely intact, and thus it has a high degree of authenticity. The interior including key original or early furniture and fittings, displays varying degrees of authenticity due to alterations in line with changing ecclesiastical fashions. The configuration of seating and other components of the interior have been extensively re-arranged from their original state, reducing the overall authenticity, but these arrangements are largely reversible.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentation for this place was compiled by Curtin University Cultural Heritage students in 2003, and Alice Steedman, Architect, with contributions from Professor David Dolan, and with additions and/or amendments by Office of Heritage staff and the Register Committee.

13.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is a simple limestone walled church with a tiled roof in the Victorian Romanesque Style on the west side of Beaufort Street in Highgate. It was built in 1889 for the population of the growing suburb of Highgate, and expanded in 1898. It continues (in 2003) to operate as a church.

The block of land on which *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* stands originally covered five acres, and extended south to Lincoln Street (where the Lincoln Flats are now). Perth Suburban Lot 166 was allocated to the Church of England for ecclesiastical purposes in 1874, but a church was not built immediately.¹

In the Spring of 1888, a small committee of residents living in the Highgate area set themselves a target of raising £300 for the construction of a small mission chapel. A newspaper article titled *The Proposed Mission Chapel at Highgate Hill* reported 'that there was a considerable population now living on the outskirts of the City at the northern extremity of Beaufort Street for which no provision for public worship has been made... Open air services were being held on a vacant piece of land and attended by a large and devout congregation.'²

The population of Perth at the time was about 11,000 and growing rapidly due to the discovery of gold. At this time there were only four Anglican churches in the colony. They were St. George's in Perth, St Bartholomew's at East Perth, St John's in Melbourne Rd (later St John's Training College, Milligan Street) and the newly built church at Claremont. The Anglican parish extended to Fremantle and in the other direction to where Bayswater is now.³

There was support for the plan for a new church at Highgate from the Dean of Perth, the Very Reverend F. Goldsmith, owing to the fact that Perth was considered too far for the rapidly growing population of Highgate to travel to, and it was expected that the building would also be used as a school. Goldsmith had been intending to establish a church 'at the back of town' for some time.⁴

Almost £70 was collected in a few days. By the end of the year, many donations had been received, and one member of the committee, Mr Hutchinson, had also promised a bell for the chapel.

By February 1889 the committee, who met at St. George's Cathedral Schoolroom, had collected £170, a piece of land owned by the church had been selected and Mr (later Sir) J.J. Talbot Hobbs, architect, had been asked to draw up the plans.

Joseph John Talbot Hobbs was born on 24 of August 1864, at Chelsea, London, and migrated to Perth in 1887. He began work as a carpenter making seats for the Fremantle Railway Station, but soon set up practice as an architect. Hobbs became a leader of the small band of Perth architects and was a founder and the first treasurer (1896) and later President (1909-1911) of the West Australian

1 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Good Grace - the Beginnings & Present Life of St Alban's, Highgate' Unpublished brochure, 1989.

2 14 January, 1889, newspaper article titled *The Proposed Mission Chapel at Highgate Hill*

3 *The West Australian*, 1937, p5.

4 Burton, Canon. *The Early Days of St Alban's Church, Highgate Hill, WA*. No publisher listed, p4.

Institute of Architects. In 1905 Hobbs formed the firm of Hobbs, Smith & Forbes of which he was the senior partner. As an architect Hobbs appears to have had original ideas on design, as reflected in his developing the vernacular forms found in Western Australia. He built in a range of local materials brick, stone and weatherboard and sometimes a combination of all of these.

Hobbs was a devout Christian. He was deeply involved in the affairs of the Anglican Church, serving in synod and on various councils and as the architect for the Perth diocese. Above all he was a devoted soldier. Upon arrival in Perth in 1887, he joined the Volunteer Field Artillery. With the outbreak of war in 1914, sixteen days before his fiftieth birthday, he was appointed Divisional Commander of the Royal Artillery. On 28 November 1918 Hobbs was promoted to lieutenant-general and created Knight Commander of St Michael and St George for his distinguished war time service, he also received the French Croix de Guerre avec Palme. Upon returning to Perth after the war, Sir Talbot Hobbs recommenced his architectural practice whilst involving himself heavily in the affairs of returned servicemen.

By around 1889 some of the more progressive English and colonial architects (for example Herbert Baker in South Africa) had started rejecting the fancy neo-gothic manner and turning to a Romanesque inspired style as an alternative. Hobb's prior English experience was limited to drafting and at the time of the construction of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* he was presenting himself to Perth as an architect. In the circumstances it was professionally wise as well as financially necessary to keep his design simple. The effect of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* is reminiscent of simple small churches designed by military engineers in various colonies.

The small building was expected to seat 150 people and cost £280. It was to have a place for a choir and organ, as well as a vestry. Stained glass, which had been imported for the cathedral but not required, would be used for several of the windows. The West Australian newspaper in 1889 recorded 'St Albans will form an important addition to the buildings which have been erected of late years, and picturesquely situated in one of the best parts of the city, it will be one of the prettiest little churches in the colony.'

The builder was Mr Fred Collett and the church was deliberately set back from Lincoln Street in order that it could be replaced by a larger, more permanent structure on the corner of Lincoln and Beaufort Streets in the future. Similar churches were springing up around Perth at the time, at a distance from the centre, with a Congregational Hall being opened in North Fremantle a little earlier, which also operated as a school.

Amid much ceremony and celebration, one of the founders and supporters of the Mission Chapel, Mrs. Hare, laid the Foundation Stone on 27 February 1889, as part of a full choral church service. Shortly afterwards, a picnic tea was served, attended by 300 people, many coming from other parts of Perth to contribute. More money was raised on the day, and put towards the building fund. The Foundation Stone bore a cross on the eastern side and the following inscription:

To the glory of God and in the faith of Christ, Amen.

This stone was laid by Mrs. Hare, Feb. 27th, 1889, A.D.

J. Talbot Hobbs, Architect.⁵

⁵ *The West Australian*, 28 February 1889

On 18 March 1889, the first bell manufactured in the colony was cast for *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* by Tomlinson's Brothers foundry in Perth. The bell weighed 56 pounds and was donated to the church by Mr Hutchinson, who also played the harmonium, providing the music for the continuing open air services.⁶ Apparently when the molten metal was ready to be poured into the mould, Tomlinson suggested, 'onlookers throw in their silver offerings.' Coins to the value of about ten shillings were added to the mould and the bell was cast.⁷

The building was expected to be completed by June 1889 and was constructed on target in just 15 weeks, with *The West Australian* announcing on 10 June that it was ready for services.⁸ A large number of visitors from outside the area attended the first two services.

The church was 'constructed of stone, with red brick buttresses and window dressings, and copings and ornamental strings, etc.' It was considered plain, but 'neat and airy'. The roof was of jarrah shingles, with a bell turret or fleche at the western gable. The nave was 40 feet in length, by 25 feet in width, so very modest in size. A jarrah screen formed the vestry and choir accommodation. The window in the sanctuary, the middle window on each side and also a small window in the front were to be filled with some of the stained glass that was originally purchased for the old St. George's Cathedral.⁹

In memory of the Very Rev. Frederick Goldsmith, a pioneer member of the church donated the stained glass window at the western end of the building portraying St Alban, the legionary who became Britain's first martyr.¹⁰

Chairs were provided for seating, and some of the furniture and fittings were donated. Ornamental iron lamp pendants were installed as lighting. The main entrance was in the western end and there was also an entrance from the vestry. The building was described as Norman in style, and while Perth was not built up, could be seen from a long distance away, becoming a landmark.

At the time of opening, there was still a considerable debt on the building and although money could have been raised by reserving seats, all the seating was kept free and open to all. This was an indication that it was in an area not of privilege, but of ordinary working people.

Rev. Fred J. Price, the first Rector at *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*, travelled from Melbourne at the invitation of Dean Goldsmith in 1892. After disembarking from the collier *Cloncurry* at Albany, he came by train to Perth where he was met by among others, the Dean and J.J. Talbot Hobbs. Hobbs was by this time considered to be a pillar of the church.¹¹ Later, Rev. Price recalled 'settlement on the north side of the railway line had just begun. Over the railway bridge along Beaufort Street was the old prison. There was a macadamised road past this and the Beaufort Arms as far as Brisbane Street, after that, sand. Half a mile further on was [Saint Alban's Church].'¹²

6 This business was the forerunner to Tomlinson Steel. This bell was passed onto St. Augustine's in Bayswater and resides in front of this church today.

7 Elphinstone, P. *The bells of St. Alban's* in *The West Australian* 12 June, 1998, p10.

8 Burton, Canon. *The Early Days of St Alban's Church, Highgate Hill, WA*. No publisher listed, pp5-6.

9 *The West Australian*, 28 February 1889

10 Elphinstone, P. *The bells of St. Alban's* in *The West Australian* 12 June, 1998, p10.

11 Alexander, F. (ed.) *Four Bishops and their See, Perth, Western Australia 1857-1957*. University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A. 1957, p55.

12 In a series of articles printed in the *West Australian* in October 1937.

In 1895, a Rectory was built in Lincoln Street for Reverend Price, and in 1896 funds were raised to build the Church Hall which was located on the corner of Beaufort Street and what is now St Alban's Avenue. The Hall was used for social events, mission services, and a Sunday School which up to 200 children attended. Reverend Price lived in the Rectory and was given the responsibility of guiding Saint Alban's to independence. Saint Alban's was intended to be a test case for the division of the Perth Diocese into smaller parishes.¹³

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate was an integral part of the early Anglican Church of Perth structure. It was initially the responsibility of Saint George's Cathedral, as it had no clergy of its own. Dean Goldsmith and his associated ministers conducted the services at *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* until 1897, when Reverend Price was formally instituted as the Rector of the Parish.¹⁴ After this time, the St Alban's clergy and congregation acted as missionaries into other areas, supporting both organisationally and financially the development of Saint Augustine's in Bayswater¹⁵, and bringing services to the people of Leeder Estate, now Leederville.

On 21 January 1898 it was decided to proceed with the enlargement of the church according to a sketch by Mr Hobbs. A sub-committee was appointed to consider ways and means and call for tenders and draw up a report for the vestry. On 1 February 1898 the Secretary wrote to the Diocesan Trustees, asking leave to mortgage the southern portion of church land to enable the vestry to proceed. A copy of this letter was sent to the Church Office with plans enclosed for approval. The minutes record 'the present is a very opportune time for building as material and labour be exceptionally low and Mr. Hobbs informs us we would be wise in accepting the lowest tender.' The lowest tender received was about £699 (the highest was £1,040.) The tender from Mr Hewitt was accepted.

Revd. Price described the idea behind the rebuilding: 'Our idea in rebuilding was to enlarge the little old church in such a way that it would serve eventually as a schoolroom, the aisles being divided into class-rooms opening into the nave, which would become a central hall. We did not think of it in those days as the permanent church. The magnificent site at the corner of Lincoln and Beaufort Street was reserved for that, and that is the reason why the reconstructed building when complete, was dedicated but not consecrated.'¹⁶

Significant changes to the repositioning of existing windows and installation of new windows was planned. The vestry minutes of 4 March 1898 document that with regard to specifications for the windows 'the circular window at present in the west be placed in the east and that the Ascension window be placed in the north aisle. The centre window in the west end be plain cathedral glass for the present.' The use of small neo-Romanesque style round-arched windows, rather than the larger pointed windows characteristic of Victorian neo-gothic churches, the most distinctive feature of the original chapel, was sustained for consistency in the additions of 1898.

13 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Good Grace - the Beginnings & Present Life of St Alban's, Highgate'. Unpublished brochure, 1989.

14 Doncaster, EW. 1951. *The Diocese of Perth, WA: An Historical Record from 1829 to date*. No publisher listed, p12.

15 Burton, Canon. *The Early Days of St Alban's Church, Highgate Hill, WA*. No publisher listed, p19.

16 Burton, Canon. *The Early Days of St Alban's Church, Highgate Hill, WA*. No publisher listed, p17-18. The vestry minutes of 11 May 1911 make note about the sale of a portion of land on Lincoln Street. There is a block of flats on the corner today.

The windows on either side of the church that feature St. Michael and St. George were installed at this time. Originally these two windows were intended for Saint George's Cathedral but, after they had been paid for, it was discovered they were the wrong shape – Norman instead of Gothic design. After years in storage they were given a permanent home at *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*.¹⁷

The vestry minutes of 5 July 1898 record that the laying of the Memorial Stone¹⁸ blessed by Bishop Riley and laid by Sir John Forrest was planned to take place on 23 July 1898 but the actual date recorded was 30 July 1898. A trowel to be used for the occasion was to be purchased out of the church building fund and not to exceed £2.2.0. This trowel was engraved with the details of its importance, and is now in storage at the WA Museum. The Second Annual General Report, dated 30 April, 1899 states that when the enlargement and furnishings were completed in October 1898 the cost was £920.3.11.¹⁹ Of this, £600 was borrowed from the Diocesan Trustees, two grants were received – one of £70 from the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the other, £50 from the Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). The balance was raised locally. The dedication of the completed church took place on All Saints Day, 1 November 1898.

Circa 1900, *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* was widely criticised for being too 'Roman', and the Bishop of Perth was expected to be able to put a stop to these practices.²⁰ Saint Alban's significance in the Anglican church structure can be seen in the amount of concern given to practices at the church which were different to those sanctioned by the Cathedral.

In 1902 when the Queen Memorial Tower with its eight bells was added to the cathedral, a bell, believed to be one of the oldest in Australia, was offered to *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*. This bell was cast by Thomas Mears in London in 1806 and installed in the London docks area in that year. The people in the Docks area complained about the noise when it was installed, and in 1842 the bell was purchased by Henry Manning for the newly built Saint George's Church.²¹ The Sixth Annual General Report dated 30 April 1903, records that 'St George's vestry asked the Bishop to give the bell which hung for so many years in the Cathedral tower to any parish he thought fit. He offered the bell to St. Alban's Church as the first parish cut off from the Cathedral parish on the condition the old St. Alban's Church bell be handed on to Bayswater.'²² In 1903, the lot was subdivided and Saint Alban's Avenue was created.²³

17 Elphinstone, P. *The bells of St. Alban's* in *The West Australian* 12 June, 1998, p10.

18 Both the Foundation Stone (1889) and the Memorial Stone (1898) still exist and are embedded near each other in the east wall. The Foundation Stone, though worn and the inscription too difficult to read, is in the original part of the east wall of the church. The Memorial Stone, also difficult to read, is in the extended section of the east wall.

19 The Second Annual General Report dated 30 April, 1899

20 Tonkin, John. 2001. *Cathedral and Community*. Perth, University of Western Australia Press, p 68-9.

21 Thomas Mears was the same firm who built Big Ben for the House of Parliament in Westminster. When St George's church was demolished and the new cathedral built, the bell moved there. The bell is still (2003) at Saint Alban's Church. In recent discussions with the current property manager it appears the bell was, until about five years ago, still used and hung from a metal tower in the church grounds. It now resides on the floor inside the church in an unused porch area on the south side of the building.

22 Vestry minutes 1898-1915

23 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Good Grace - the Beginnings & Present Life of St Alban's, Highgate'. Unpublished brochure, 1989.

There is mention in the vestry minutes of 1 August 1907 about the Sisters of the Church wanting to hire the church hall for a day school, 'On the motion of Messrs. Tolhurst and Baker the Sisters of the Church are to have the use of the hall for a day school at a rate of 10/-'. The Twelfth Annual General Report dated 1 May 1908 – 30 April 1909 comments, 'we would draw the attention of the parishioners to St. Alban's Preparatory Day School, conducted by the Sisters of the Church in the parish hall.' Subsequent reports make similar comment.

The Sisters of the Church in England were established in the mid-nineteenth century and carried out social and charity work among orphanages and the poor. In 1901, Bishop Riley wrote on behalf of the clergy of Western Australia to the Sisters of the Church in England requesting their aid and presence in the new colony and in November 1901 three Sisters arrived in Fremantle. At this time Bishop Riley and other clergy were concerned with the lack of church schools in Perth and this was to be the Sisters' first task. On 4 February 1902, the school opened with 'Tower House' and St. Mary's Hall (West Perth) being used as the school buildings. After much discussion the name Perth College was decided on with the motto 'Pro Ecclesia Dei.' By 1907, this college in West Perth was considered too far away for parents to send their children to, and in response to many requests and with the cooperation of Archdeacon Hudleston, Rector of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*, a preparatory level school was housed in St. Alban's Church Hall. This school opened in October 1907 and its purpose was to cater for children in Highgate and Mt. Lawley who were too young to attend Perth College.²⁴ By 1913, the Sisters had established a number of schools and these were all eventually amalgamated into the present Perth College in Mt. Lawley, the Foundation Stone being laid by the Governor, Sir Harry Barron on 17 July 1915.²⁵

In 1939, the Lincoln Flats were built on Lincoln Street, on the part of the block which had previously been reserved for a larger, permanent church.²⁶

During the ministry of Reverend Mann (1956-1963) the original Parish Hall (1896), was replaced, and a new hall was built further back behind the church. Annual Reports for the church record that the second Parish Hall was built at a cost of £11,500, £200 of which was still outstanding. A letter dated 7 December 1961 was written to the Rectory from Rev Mann asking for donations to meet the amount.

In 1966, the portion of the lot in Lincoln Street with the Rectory (1895) on it was sold and the Rectory demolished. A new Rectory was built adjacent to the church. Three church houses on the other side of Saint Alban's Avenue were also sold at this time.²⁷

A vestry entry for 1969, dated 30 June, discusses the 80th anniversary celebratory restoration of the church involving the walls and roof, installation of a covered way between the church and the hall and a hall kitchen. An entry dated 5 May 1970 discusses the commencement of a restoration fund for renovation of *Saint Albans Church, Highgate* with the possibility of a property bequest being settled at Mt

²⁴ May, C. *Built on faith: a history of Perth College* Crawley, W.A. University of Western Australia Press, 2002, p64.

²⁵ Evans, K. *The Kilburn Sisters in Western Australia*, pp1,3,5-6,18.

²⁶ 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Good Grace - the Beginnings & Present Life of St Alban's, Highgate' Unpublished brochure, 1989. No explanation is given in the brochure as to why the lot was sold and the permanent church not built.

²⁷ 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Good Grace - the Beginnings & Present Life of St Alban's, Highgate'. Unpublished brochure, 1989. Further research is needed to establish when the three church houses were built and for what purpose.

Lawley providing funds for the roof and outside walls. On 11 June 1971, it was noted that damp coursing and re-roofing of the Church was completed with financing by the bequest of the estate of Francis Matthews.

Until at least the 1960s, *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* continued to conduct pastoral work that was partially funded by Saint George's Cathedral.²⁸ In a brochure published to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the church in 1969, Rector Bryan F. Hall comments that 'since the beginning there has been much evidence of the vital role that St. Alban's has played in the lives of the people of Perth.'²⁹

Saint Albans Church, Highgate has been, and continues to be a significant site of Anglican worship, and is thus significant to the local Anglican community. *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* is, for its large congregation, a site of spiritual importance and it has become 'firmly established as a centre of evangelical witness and worship, with many going out from the congregation as missionaries and ordained ministers'³⁰. The building provides the congregation with a link to their past, as well as a space in which to worship.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate also has a secular social function. The Church runs a 'Soup Kitchen' every Saturday, and the Hall is used for a number of community-focused activities from 'Dancing at St. Alban's' to meetings of both Alcoholics Anonymous³¹ and Narcotics Anonymous³². *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* provides the residents of the area with a tangible link to their heritage, and in doing so contributes to their sense of place within the suburb. *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*, often known as 'the ivy covered church', has a landmark status for many of the people of Perth, and as such is synonymous for many with the Highgate section of Beaufort Street.

13.2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is a simple limestone walled building in the Victorian Romanesque Style³³ located on the west side of Beaufort Street in Highgate near the corner of St. Alban's Avenue. It was built in 1889 for the population of the growing suburb of Highgate, and expanded in 1898. It continues to operate as a church.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is a simple, limestone church with a tiled roof and brick buttresses. Also on site is the red brick Church Hall and face brick former Rectory.

The church is set within large grounds raised slightly above the surrounding street levels and are retained with a rendered brick wall in ruled ashlar. The boundary wall is in a reasonable condition and exhibits only minor cracking and patching. *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* is located centrally on the Beaufort Street frontage with the church hall flanking its north side (St. Alban's Avenue) and a former rectory located at the south-west corner of the site. A driveway

28 Tonkin, John. 2001. *Cathedral and Community*. Perth, University of Western Australia Press, p138.
29 Diocese of Perth, *St. Alban's Church Highgate Hill 1889-1969* [Booklet at the Battye Library in the Cabinet under 283.9411] c.1969, pp.1-4.
30 'Our History', *St. Alban's Home Page*, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~stalbans/>, 05/06/03.
31 'Meetings', Alcoholics Anonymous, http://members.iinet.net.au/~essbee/aa_wa/Perth%20Metro%20Meetings.htm, 05/06/03.
32 'Meetings', Narcotics Anonymous, <http://www.naoz.org.au/wa.htm>, 05/06/03.
33 Apperly, R., Irving, R. and Reynolds, P. *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture*. Harper Collins, Sydney, 1995. pp75-77

leads from St. Alban's Avenue to a car park located at the rear of the former rectory.

Several mature trees are located towards the south-east corner of the site including jacaranda, cape lilac, and eucalypts. The north-east corner of the grounds and the courtyard to the west of the Church are grassed. A heavily planted shrubbery is located in front of the eastern façade of the Church and the planting is continued along the northern façade in roses and smaller shrubs. The hall also has a thick planting of bottlebrush to its eastern façade. All plantings appear well maintained.

A wide concrete slab path from Beaufort Street leads to the south porch. An alternative path from St Alban's Avenue gives access to the Church and hall via a path between the two buildings. The main entry to the Church is via double doors located at the western end of the northern elevation of the building. A steel roof has been constructed between the hall and church. The roof structure is crudely bolted to the walls of the church and detracts from the visual appreciation of the building.

The hall appears to have been constructed in three stages. The first being the main hall and the subsequent stages being the rear (western) wing containing toilets and an office and an area to the east end of the hall adjacent to the Church. All sections are constructed in a hard red face brick with low pitched metal deck roofs. A covered way runs around the internal perimeter of the I-shaped hall.

The former rectory is an L-shaped modest residence constructed in champagne and chocolate coloured face brick with a concrete tiled hipped roof. It has clear anodised aluminium sliding windows. The building is screened from the road and the Church by a heavy planting of trees and shrubs.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is constructed on a limestone footing and has brick-buttresses and quoining to windows. It has cement rendered dressings to its parapeted gables, buttresses, and window heads, sills and mullions. In plan it consists of a nave with two side aisles running the full length of the building, a sanctuary at the eastern end and a small porch to the south-west. The south-eastern end of the south aisle contains the organ and a vestry. The nave, porch, vestry and aisles are each contained under parapeted, moderately pitched gable roofs clad in steel tile sheets. A fleche with a steeply pitched corrugated iron roof is located at the western end of the main ridge. Two gabled roof vents are located on the northern side of the main roof. Gutters are colonial profile corrugated galvanized steel with rectangular profile downpipes. A decorative cornice of ogee profile brick above splayed dentils is located below the gutters on the north and south elevations. Decorative cast iron vents are located mid-way up the walls on both aisles.

The exterior of the church is generally in good condition for its age however previous restoration work has tended to detract from the overall appearance. This includes the application of pre-painted corrugated galvanized steel flashings to the parapets, installation of aluminium damp proof course and inappropriate re-pointing of brickwork and filling of cracks. The western façade and south west corner at the rear of the porch has been rendered with and ruled ashlar finish and painted, and acrylic screen have been installed over the windows. Downpipes, whilst being rectangular rather than circular in section have been neatly installed. No attempt has been made to direct stormwater away from the base of the building. Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) thickly covers much of the southern elevation. In 2009, the creeper that covers much of the southern

elevation of *St Albans Church* was found to be Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) and not Ivy as previously thought. However, a site visit by HCWA staff in March 2009, confirmed that although deciduous, the creeper covering St Albans was most likely dead. A memorial stone commemorating the extension of the Church is located on the eastern wall of the north aisle.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate has triplet round-arched windows on the north and south elevations with the central window of each triplet containing a casement window and a small hopper for ventilation. These windows are lead lights in small square panes of coloured glass. The central window at the eastern end of the northern façade has been replaced with a memorial window in stained glass. A stained glass oculus is located in the wall of the sanctuary and a leadlight oculus in the wall of the gable over the vestry. All the windows on the western elevation and the window at the eastern end of the northern aisle are stained glass. All of these windows are round-arched windows, with the window of the nave being a triplet depicting Saints Alban, George and Michael. Other windows depict Saint Luke, Christ and the disciples and The Virgin Mary and Child.

Doors are all solid v-jointed timber framed round-arched doors with decorative cast iron strap hinges to the exterior. All doors are showing signs of damage and rot to the base. The wall around the main entry door indicates the possible outline of a previous structure at this location. The interior doors to the south porch appear not to be in keeping with other original detailing.

The interior of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* has painted rendered ruled ashlar walls, face brick quoining to windows and a timber (possibly Baltic pine) panelled ceiling above exposed jarrah purlins, trusses and beams. Significant sagging is noticeable in the purlins. Octagonal shaped jarrah columns support the beams on either side of the nave. Jarrah is further used to form three-centred arches between the columns and capitol mouldings. In many cases the timber used in the arches has shrunk away from the columns leaving a noticeable crack. Circular marks on the columns indicate the previous location of light fittings. Electric bar-type radiators are now attached to each column.

Alterations to the plan of the Church are visible in the floors with the outline of the original church clearly visible in the nave. Other alterations include the extension of the raised sanctuary onto the northern aisle and the removal of railings around the edge of the sanctuary floor.

The vestry is divided from the sanctuary by a decorative jarrah screen which partly covers the façade of the organ. The screen appears to be an early item of the building's fit-out. A false ceiling has been constructed above the organ to deflect sound.

The furniture items within the Church appear to have been collected throughout the years of its operation. Many are dedicated memorials to past parishioners or gifts to the Church. The pulpit appears to be one of the early items of furniture. Memorial stones and plaques have been mounted on the wall of the south aisles.

Minor cracking is visible in the head of the arch of the main door and rising damp is evident on the west and south walls, with severe spalling noted on the brick column at the junction of the nave and south aisles at the eastern end of the Church.

The early fabric of *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* (including the extensions of 1898) is still largely intact, and thus it has a high degree of authenticity. The interior including key original or early furniture and fittings, displays varying degrees of authenticity due to alterations in line with changing ecclesiastical

fashions. The configuration of seating and other components of the interior have been extensively re-arranged from their original state, reducing the overall authenticity, but these arrangements are largely reversible.

The building was being painted internally on the day of inspection (13 May 2003). Areas of damp were being cleaned of loose material, sealed with an oil based sealer and painted with an acrylic top-coat.

13.3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

There are 85 other places on the Heritage Council database that were designed by J.J. Talbot Hobbs, or his firms Hobbs & Smith or Hobbs, Smith & Forbes, of which 44 were constructed between 1880 and 1900. Six of these have had a religious use at some time. All six are registered, and they are: P00491 *Christ Church and Rectory, Claremont* (1893-1938); P00935 *Victoria Hall* (1896-1897), Fremantle; P01009 *Scots Presbyterian Church* (1890), Fremantle; Parish Hall at P2030 *St Brigid's Group, Perth* (c.1900); P040411 *St Luke's Anglican Church Group* (1897), Mosman Park; and P04342 *Residence, 52 Mount Street* (1892-1984), West Perth.

Scots Presbyterian Church, St Luke's Anglican Church and the church at *Christ Church and Rectory, Claremont* are comparable as relatively small limestone churches, and the Parish Hall at *St Brigid's Group, Perth* is comparable as a single volume brick hall with simple features reminiscent of church design. *Victoria Hall* is not comparable as it is double volume building with a mezzanine level. *Residence, 52 Mount Street* is also not comparable as its religious use was as housing or quarters.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is the earliest of Hobbs' religious buildings on the Heritage Council database. This information is confirmed by an inventory of his early work created from his ledgers, which lists the 'Church at Highgate Hill' as his first church. Regardless of use, the only buildings to pre-date *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* on this list are Mr W. Samson's House, Cliff Street Fremantle and 'Crosslands' Villa, Guildford (both 1887); and the Swan River Rowing Club (1888). Built in the same year as *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* (1889) were W.A. Rowing Club and Sandover's Warehouse, Mouat Street, Fremantle. Hobbs had only arrived in Western Australia two years prior to designing *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate*, and it was not until he designed the Weld Club in 1891 that his reputation became established, and he was commissioned to design significant public buildings.³⁴

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate therefore has significance for its early place in the work of J.J. Talbot Hobbs, in particular for being his first religious building.

There are seven other places on the Heritage Council database, designed at least in part in the Victorian Romanesque style, five of which have had a religious use at some time. They are P01145 *St James' Church* (1872), South Greenough; P02332 *Holy Trinity Anglican Church* (1895, registered) Roebourne; the main building at P02401 *Clontarf* (1901, registered), Waterford; The Abbey Church at P02622 *Benedictine Monastery Precinct* (1860, 1870, 1908, 1923), New Norcia; and, P03213 *Holy Trinity Church, Hall and Rectory* (1856-1875, registered), York.

Of these, *St James' Church, South Greenough* is comparable to *Saint Alban's Church, Highgate* although it is from a slightly earlier timeframe, as it is a small

³⁴ Inventory of Hobbs' buildings in 'The works of John Talbot Hobbs from his ledgers'. Unpublished typescript available in the Heritage Council library (807WA.10).

stone church in a prominent location, with a centrally placed timber door. *Holy Trinity Anglican Church*, Roebourne, is also comparable as a small stone church with landmark qualities, but it is described as a North-west Vernacular style building, with some Victorian Romanesque elements. *Holy Trinity Church, Hall and Rectory*, York is comparable although from an earlier timeframe. The Abbey Church at New Norcia was originally similar but has been significantly extended with a corresponding change in overall style. *Clontarf* is not comparable as it is a large residential facility.

Irrespective of style, there are 24 places on the Heritage Council database with a religious use, constructed between 1880 and 1900 at least in part with limestone. Fourteen of these are in the metropolitan region. Aside from those mentioned above, the remainder are: P00845 *St Patrick's Basilica and St Patrick's Presbytery* (1900-1916, registered), Fremantle; P00894 *Fremantle Grammar School (fmr)* (1885-1960, registered); P00955 *Wesley Church* (1889-1928, registered), Fremantle; P02030 *St Paul's Anglican Church, Presbytery and Hall* (1892, current assessment program), Beaconsfield; P01927 *St Columba's Church and Hall* (1896-1909, registered), Peppermint Grove; P02181 *Sacred Heart Convent and School* (1899-1978, registered) Highgate; P02237 *Charles Street Methodist Mission Chapel & Methodist Church*, (1890) West Perth; and P04041 *St Luke's Anglican Church Group* (1897-1903), Mosman Park.

Saint Alban's Church, Highgate is rare as a small stone church in the Victorian Romanesque style and the only example of such in the HCWA database from the 1880s.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

No key references.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

While this assessment addresses the church itself, more information about other buildings that were once part of the site would contribute to the understanding of the place as a whole. More information is needed about the row of three 'church houses' on the other side of Saint Alban's Avenue as labelled on a diagram in the brochure 'Celebrating One Hundred Years of God's Grace - the beginnings and present life of St Alban's, Highgate'.³⁵ An explanation as to why the portion of the land at the corner of Lincoln and Beaufort Streets, which was reserved for a permanent church, was not used for that purpose may be revealed with this research.

³⁵ A copy of this brochure can be found in the Heritage Council file PD02178.