

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

name: Former St Johns Catholic Church
Address: 27-29 Main Street NATIMUK
Place Type: Church,Residence
Citation Date: 2022



St Johns Catholic Church, 27-29 Main Street Natimuk

Recommended Heritage Protection **VHR -**

HI -

PS
Yes

Integrity

Excellent (restored) condition and all early fabric of church extant. Pews and liturgical furniture no longer extant.

History and Historical Context

St John's Roman Catholic Church, constructed in 1916, is the second church building situated on this site. The first was a simple timber structure erected in 1889 by Goroke builders McDonald and Lindsay. The church stood on land purchased from Peter Mitchell of Quantong and comprised part allotments 6 & 7, Section 2, township of Natimuk.

Horsham Catholic Parish was established in March 1876, with a church dedicated to St Michael and St John constructed in 1879. Fr O'Sullivan was recorded to have conducted Mass in Natimuk from July 1876, although few services were held and these took place at the home of J.F. Ryan. Regular services didn't commence until

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the arrival of Parish Priest Rev. Father John Hogan in 1887, who conducted Mass on a monthly basis at locations including the Mechanics' Institute in Noradjuha and Natimuk, John Carrick's Hotel in Natimuk and at the homes of parishioners. [1]

In an effort to raise funds for the construction of a dedicated place of worship parishioners organized a number of events during the 1880s. Most notably a grand bazaar, ball and supper were held during August 1886. [2]

St John's Roman Catholic Church was officially consecrated on Sunday 15 September 1889 by Rev. Dr. Delaney, with assistance from Father Hogan. [3] The church soon became an important gathering place for local parishioners and a permanent focus for worship, with Mass held on a regular basis by Parish Priest Father O'Brien who replaced Rev. Father Hogan who had departed in late 1889.

There are a number of published accounts which suggest that St John's was damaged and subsequently demolished in 1897 as the result of a cyclone which lashed parts of the Wimmera (and was particularly devastating in Nhill). However, it is almost certain that the church was damaged in a violent storm that occurred on the 5th of January 1916. The *Natimuk Advertiser* records that several buildings in Natimuk were 'unroofed' and St John's 'tilted over' to a 'list to the east of about 45 degrees'. [4]

Subsequent reports indicate that the storm rendered the church building 'unfit for use'. [5] The church was eventually demolished, with parts of the original building salvaged for re-use. Land situated adjacent to the church site was purchased to accommodate a larger building, with local builder T H Bousfield contracted for the work. [6]

Once again parishioners were called upon to contribute to the construction of a church, with a target for subscriptions set at £250. Mr F. R. Ratcliffe of Natimuk's Ratcliffe & Co store was noted as a generous contributor to fund raising efforts and local families were recorded as pledging £30 each, with Parish Priest Father Mead donating £25. [7]

The newly constructed St John's Roman Catholic Church was officially opened on Sunday May 21, 1916. *The Horsham Times* describing the proceedings:

Sunday last was a red letter day for the Roman Catholic people of this district (writes our Natimuk correspondent) being the opening day of the new church in Natimuk. When some months ago a storm rendered the old building unsafe, a meeting of the Catholic congregation was called to consider the matter of rebuilding, and so generous was the response that the work was at once put in hand, and the result is a building of which the members can be proud, and, opened on Sunday practically free of debt, stands as a monument and an example to other denominations of the Catholic people's devoutness and generosity. The church is of weatherboard, the main part measuring 22 feet by 54 feet, with a vestry 12 feet by 15 feet, and porch 8 feet square abutting. It is beautifully finished inside. A steel dado of Gothic pattern sets off the walls, and the altar has all steel walls of cream with a dainty pattern picked out in brown, these last artistic touches being the work of Messrs G. Antony and J Bousfield. The contractor 'or the building was Mr. T.H. Bousfield, to whom due credit must be given for first-class work. The opening ceremony was very largely attended, a good number of other denominations being present, including several members of the Shire of Arapiles. The ceremony of blessing the church was conducted by the Rev. Father Hunt; of the Redemptorist Monastery, Ballarat, and the Rev. Father Meade, parish priest, said the Mass. A forcible sermon was delivered by the Rev. Father Hunt, and the choir of St. Michael and St. John's Church, of Horsham, sang the Winter's Mass and the Ave Maria. The collection which was taken up in aid of the building fund amounted to £50 (including promises), and as mentioned previously, practically completes the amount necessary for the whole of the work. Mr. G. Antony is the secretary of the building committee, and deserves praise for the time and trouble he has taken in the work.[8]

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Weekly Mass was conducted at St John's from 1930 until 1997 when services were reduced to the last Sunday of the month.

By May 2010 services were relocated to Natimuk's Uniting Church as St John's was considered by the Ballarat Diocese to be 'beyond repair and no longer safe' as a site for worship. The church is now held in private ownership. It was renovated in 2012-13 has recently (late 2013) been sold as a residence.

[1] Lockwood, Allan., *Our Home Among a Caring Community: Natimuk ... now 125*, 1997, pp. 36 – 37.

[2] Lockwood, 1997, 36; *Horsham Times*, 9 July 1886, p 6

[3] *Horsham Times*, 3 September 1889, p. 30;

[4] *West Wimmera Mail and Natimuk Advertiser*, Friday 7 January 1916, p. 1, Friday 14 January 1916, p. 1;

[5] *Horsham Times*, Tuesday 25 January 1916, page 5.

[6] *ibid*, p. 1

[7] *Ballarat Courier*, Saturday 26 February 1916, page 10; Lockwood, p. 36

[8] *Horsham Times*, 23 May 1916, p. 5

Description

Physical Description

Timber framed and timber weatherboard clad church, with CGI clad gable roof and stumped floor. Entry porch and vestry also gable roofed. Finials of note – featuring decorative crosses. Church features lancet double hung windows, with decorative timber glazing bars. Front window has trefoil glazing, with a rose window at the top. Church features two porches. Interior features a coved ceiling lined with beaded boards and exposed metal tie rods. Altar has a raised floor, with the chancel wall lined with decorative pressed metal panelling. Decorative pressed metal panelling with gothic arch motifs also features as wainscoting around the nave.

Physical Condition

Good condition – recently renovated. Contemporary bathroom and kitchen in vestry. Original church furniture and vestments no longer extant.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Relevant HERCON Criteria

Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history. (represents the Catholic spiritual needs of residents in Natimuk in the late 19th and early 20th Century – a period when the town was becoming established as an important rural settlement, servicing the surrounding agricultural district and new train line between Horsham and (finally) Carpolac.)

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics. (intact and well-resolved design)

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example of 'Federation Carpenter Gothic' style architecture of the period within the region)

Criterion G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions. (centre for local Catholic worship and fellowship 1916-2010. As this is now a private dwelling, this social significance is likely to have waned.)

Comparative Analysis

Comparison with local Horsham Shire churches only undertaken – not considered of state-wide significance:

Church, 23 Church St, Jung, Hermes no. 191385: Similar scale, era and construction – but now collapsing.

Church, Natimuk/Hamilton Rd, Noradjuha, Hermes no. 186192: Simple chapel church – similar scale and era, but simpler in detail – also now clad with aluminium sheeting

Church, Mitre-Grass Flat Rd, Grass Flat, Hermes no. 186075: Simple masonry chapel form church – similar scale and era – different construction method and less decoration

Church, 35 Main St, Natimuk, Hermes no. 186172: Similar style, construction type, era and themes – simpler in detailing though.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The elements of heritage value of the 1916 St John's Catholic Church, 27-29 Main Street, Natimuk, include:

- . external form of the 1916 church building, including timber weatherboard cladding, CGI sheet roof
- . finial ornamentation
- . windows, doors, verandahs–

How is it significant?

The (former) 1916 St John's Catholic Church, Natimuk, is of historical and aesthetic significance to Horsham Rural City.

Why is it significant?

The (former) 1916 St John's Catholic Church, Natimuk, is:

- . of local historical significance, as it represents the spiritual needs of Catholic residents in Natimuk in the late 19th and early 20th Century – a period when the town was becoming established as an important rural settlement, servicing the surrounding agricultural district and new train line between Horsham and (finally) Carpolac. The present building replaced the original 1889 church in this location. (Criterion A)

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. of local aesthetic significance, representing an intact and well resolved, high integrity, architectural example of 'Federation Carpenter Gothic' style architecture of the period within the region. The combination of building form proportions, compound gable roof form, distinctive finial decoration and the gothic patterning of fenestration all contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the place. (Criterion E)

Recommendations 2022

External Paint Controls	Yes
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

References

Literature title: Ballarat Courier Newspaper

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

Literature title: Horsham Times Newspaper

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

Literature title: Our Home Among a Caring Community: Natimuk ... now 125

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Lockwood, Allan.

Literature publisher: Back to Natimuk Committee, Natimuk

Literature year: 1997

Literature title: A Historical Review of Natimuk and District: Compiled in connection with the Back to Natimuk celebrations, April 5 to 12, 1947

Literature type: General Reference

Literature author: Natimuk Progress Association

Literature publisher: Natimuk Progress Association

Literature year: 1947

Literature title: West Wimmera Mail and Natimuk Advertiser

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Literature type: General Reference

Literature author:

Literature publisher:

Literature year:

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.