

---

# GEELONG ORPHAN ASYLUM AND COMMON SCHOOL SITE

---

## Location

150-220 MCCURDY ROAD HERNE HILL, GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Municipality

GREATER GEELONG CITY

## Level of significance

Heritage Inventory Site

## Heritage Inventory (HI) Number

D7721-0464

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO239

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Inventory

---

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 29, 2022

**What is significant?**

**How is it significant?**

**Why is it significant?**

Interpretation of Site

Following the initial construction of the gothic bluestone main building in 1855, built works were undertaken throughout the late 1850s until the 1870s. The included construction of: a bluestone kitchen designed by Andrew McWilliams (1856); the north wing (1857); water supply (1857); a dining hall (1860) and two playrooms (1873) constructed in brick and stone, attributed to architects Davidson & Henderson. A nursery, bathrooms, external watertanks and north facing verandah extending from the central wing were also constructed. Gardens were also created at the rear (west) of the main building on the edge of the escarpment. In addition, a turning circle and ornamental gardens were created at the front of the main building.

There is high potential for the identification of in situ subsurface footings relating to the outbuildings and to the portion of the orphanage demolished in the 1940s. There are scatters of cultural material relating to the occupation of the orphanage extending down the nearby escarpment. There is high potential for in situ traces of the former carriageway in the front garden.

Archaeological Significance

This place has been identified as having high archaeological sensitivity due to the likely presence of in situ subsurface footings and deposits relating to the outbuildings and portion of the orphanage demolished in the 1940s. A scatter of cultural heritage material relating to the occupation of the orphanage, extends down the Moorabool River escarpment to the south and east of the site. This is likely to demonstrate further tangible connections to occupation of the site. There is also high potential for in situ material relating to the former carriageway in the front garden. The precinct requires detailed archaeological recording and subsurface investigation to establish the extent of former building remains to the west of the present structure.

Historical Significance

The landscape setting is significant for its view lines, overlooking the confluence of the Barwon and Moorabool Rivers and across the valley towards the Barrabool Hills. These views were considered significant by early European settlers with the place used as a vantage point for early sketches of Fyansford. The Orphanage is significant for its association with the history of child welfare and education in Victoria as well as providing evidence of institutionalized social conditions in 19th century rural Victoria. The former orphanage, was the 4th built in Victoria during the 1850s and illustrates the attempts by government and individuals to deal with the problems of destitute and neglected children.

The former orphanage building and common school are architecturally significant and are recognized by the VHR for their design by local architects. The later use of the land as the APCL recreation facility and establishment of a large museum collection has significant ties to the celebration of a working culture and a local industry. In these later years the land was still used by displaced people, with migrant workers post WWII making this location their home.

Other Names

FORMER PROTESTANT ORPHAN ASYLUM AND COMMON SCHOOL,

Hermes Number

197481

Property Number

---

## History

The 10 acre section of land was originally reserved for the establishment of the Asylum in 1854. It can likely be attributed to the expansion of the population due to the gold rush (1851-1870) and is a poignant reminder of the social fallout from the gold mania. The Asylum was developed for destitute children deprived of one or both parents and supported by voluntary private contributions or Government assistance (cited in Willingham 2003: 32). An architectural competition was advertised by the Geelong Orphanage Asylum Committee and in late 1854, Geelong architect Andrew McWilliams was judged the winner for his Tudor-Gothic design and was awarded £50 (Willingham 2003:8). The orphanage opened at the end of 1855 with 20 children selected for placement by the committee. In subsequent years, additional rooms and outbuildings were constructed (1856, 1857, 1860, 1873, 1897) allowing additional accommodation for up to 100 inmates. A number of vocational programs were also organised for the children alongside a 'moral education' including the ethics of work and religious faith.

Pollution and pressures from the expanding Australian Portland Cement Limited (APCL) led to relocation of the Orphanage to Belmont in 1933 and APCL acquired the site in 1935. Outbuildings were demolished soon after 1940 and the grounds were redeveloped with a sports oval, bowling green and croquet lawn. From 1949 to 1954, the Orphanage housed 50 employees, sponsored by APCL, who had come to Australia as displaced persons post World War II (Willingham 2003a: 8). From 1973 to 1976, an organisation known as Geelong Creative Leisure Centre conducted community arts and crafts from the ground floor. In 1976 the Geelong Cement Retirees' Museum was established. This museum, which held a substantial collection focused on the cement works, Fyansford and Geelong, has now been disbanded.

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*