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# Shrine of St Anthony church complex



Shrine of St Anthony church complex, 180-184 Power Street Hawthorn

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## Location

180-184 Power Street HAWTHORN, BOROONDARA CITY

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO793

## Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 9, 2021

What is Significant?

The St Anthony's Shrine complex is significant as a complex of buildings appropriated or developed by the Catholic Church and the Italian community during the post-war period. It was established with the purchase of the Victorian house at 182 Power Street by the Catholic Church c.1944 for use by the Italian community, when it was

named *Villa Gonzaga*. As *Rivo Torto* the house, and neighbouring *Hirschell*, became the first home of the Capuchin monks in Melbourne from 1949. The former Victorian house *Greystroke* (demolished) was later added to the property and its stables converted to monastic use. The St Anthony's Shrine church was designed by Grigore Hirsch's 'Contemporary Architecture Group' CONARG and built over the course of 1961-69, combining modern and traditional characteristics within a Romanesque Revival design. Hundreds of Italian migrants and their families contributed towards its construction through their donations or voluntary labour. The eclectic interior decorations of the basilica, with its altar, mosaics, painted ceiling, and side chapels, are testament to the diversity, prosperity and generosity of the Italian migrant community, so many of whom donated money or volunteered in the construction and furnishing of the church. The use of materials from different regions of Italy also reflects in its built form the diverse origins and identities of the Italian migrants of the period.

Significant:

St Anthony's Shrine church The house, 'Rivo Torto', formerly 'VillaGonzaga'.

Contributory elements:

The converted stables of former 'Greystroke' Mature peppercorn trees from the remnant grounds of the Victorian era estates The elevated plaza setting with modern 'flame' sculpture and original metal lace fence.

Not Significant:

The garage and attached brick building Car park Individual improvised outdoor shrines or monuments.

How is it significant?

The St Anthony's Shrine church complex is historically, architecturally, aesthetically and socially significant to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

St Anthony's Shrine complex is historically significant for its connection to the history of the Roman Catholic Church and its missionary work among post war migration in Boroondara. (Criterion A)

The complex is representative of a religious community complex established by migrant communities in the twentieth century, established with the conversion of older Victorian residences into community use, and expanded in the post-war era with the construction of a Modern church. (Criterion D)

The church is aesthetically significant as an outstanding example of the work of CONARG architects, and for its aesthetic characteristics combining Modern and Romanesque Revival ecclesiastical design. The church is particularly distinguished by its Lombard-style porch and cast doors. (Criterion E)

St Anthony's Shrine complex is socially significant for its special association with the Roman Catholic and Italian communities in Boroondara (Criterion G).

Heritage Study/Consultant	Boroondara - Municipal-Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 3: Hawthorn, Context, 2018;
Construction dates	1961, 1903, 1869,
Architect/Designer	Conarg Associates,
Hermes Number	208296
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

The property is a substantial complex dominating the corner of Power Street and Wallen Road comprising two Victorian era houses, a Federation period stable building, and a post-war church, set within plantings, car parks and open space.

### St Anthony's Shrine Church

The St Anthony's Shrine church is a large salmon-coloured brick church in a stripped Romanesque Revival style designed using modern techniques and materials. It comprises a central brick basilica oriented facing south on Wallen Street, with rectangular chancel at the northern end. The basilica is flanked asymmetrically by galleries on the east and western sides. A copper sheathed spire rises on the eastern side of the front facade.

The basilica is entered via a Lombard porch flanked by Corinthian columns, with bronze cast doors and a mosaic peacock representing immortality, in an arched tympanum. A statue of St Anthony holding a lost child stands atop the porch apex. The 'Lombard Porch' is typically defined by a pair of free-standing columns supporting an arch or canopy projecting from the facade of a cathedral (Zarnecki in Fernie et al 1990:35). Often, the columns rest on the backs of lions or atlantes, but in St Anthony's Shrine the form has been simplified. The Lombard porch, suited to a Medieval cathedral and using materials imported from Italy, is a distinctive characteristic of St Anthony's Shrine, unusual for a modern church and unique in the City of Boroondara. The porch appears inspired by northern Italian Romanesque precedents. St Anthony's Shrine in Padua, a 13th century basilica, also has sculpted doors and a statue of the saint standing atop a Romanesque portal.

The south, or front facade, is decorated sparsely with simple brick patterning along corners and window frames, and protruding brick relief pattern. The north facade is decorated with a cross in brick relief. The east and west facades comprise lower galleries with arched stained glass windows, entered via timber double doors within brick relief doorways. The upper level windows of the clerestory are sets of double arched windows set in concrete frames that appear to be inspired by traditional mullion windows. The tops of the window frames, like the gallery doorways, echo the repeated pattern of the roof line with its gentle sloped gable and level square ends. This basic roof form on both north and south is repeated in the facade, roof line of the porch, and parapet pattern along the east and west facades. The form of the pointed roof with level ends over the tall arched window is a recurring motif in the design.

Internally, the church consists of a long nave, without transept, flanked by aisles and entered through a narthex with large double timber doors. The aisles are separated from the nave by square columns that rise into the clerestory, where window pairs are set within relief arches. Religious images are framed within the galleries. A suspended concave ceiling is decorated with paintings of the saints. From this, the original scroll-shaped light fittings are suspended. A mosaic of the Annunciation frames the chancel arch. Over the shrine of St Anthony above the main altar, a mosaic of the Crucifixion dominates the north end of the chancel. Sets of four tall windows puncture both the east and west sides of the chancel. Along the aisles, small shrines have been raised to various Italian saints, in a Baroque Revival style. The original church layout and decorations are intact, including its Baroque Revival altar and shrine, and concave painted ceiling.

The church departs from traditional ecclesiastic architecture in several ways, with its orientation along a roughly north-south rather than east-west axis, and the lack of a transept with crossing and choir separating the chancel from the nave. Elements of the church express a Modernist austerity, such as the almost sheer brick facades and simplified internal structure.

The basement of the church includes rooms that open onto the western car park. A brick wall separates the entry porch from the street, with stairs on the east and west opening onto a small front plaza decorated in black and white chequered tiles. The plaza around the south, west and north of the church is fenced by an original metal fence with repeated haloed 'saint' pattern. A white modern sculpture stands on the eastern side of the plaza. A similar style of metal 'flame' sculpture can be seen at CONARG's other modern brick basilica in Ashburton, and may be an original element of the design as the contemporary sculpture in the plaza is a typical characteristic of Modernist public architecture. Photographic comparisons illustrate the essential integrity of the church's form and decoration. The exception is the spiralet atop the bell tower, which has been recently replaced after the original fell into disrepair. The design of the replacement is sympathetic, but appears to be less steep than the original and is topped by a crucifix rather than a winged angel. The balcony on the tower has also been removed. Nonetheless the church retains its original form, and the replacement is sympathetic to the original design.

## Rivo Torto

The house *Rivo Torto* at 182 Power Street, formerly *Villa Gonzaga* and before this *Mononia*, is an intact Victorian two-story Italianate house with a front veranda with cast iron latticework, a hipped slate roof with corbelled eaves, moulded quoins, and two symmetrically placed chimneys in the centre of roof gables. The ground floor of the veranda appears to be original, while the upper level has been restored. A triple bay window projects on the ground floor of the southern side of the house. Two single timber sash windows are symmetrically placed on each floor of the north elevation and the first floor of the south elevation. Three windows extend to the balcony floor on the front elevation. Window frames on the front elevation appear to have been altered and replaced with modern frames. The central front entry consists of a timber doorway with lead light side windows. A smaller vernacular styled double-storeyed rectangular wing with single hipped roof without eaves projects at the rear. At the rear of this is a single-storeyed wing with restored veranda.

At the rear of the house at 182 Power Street is a twentieth century brick double garage. This incorporates a double-storey brick post-war residential style building with rows of three windows and corrugated iron roof overlooking the eastern lawn. It looks to be in poor condition.

## Greystroke Stables

The only built remains of the former Victorian house *Greystroke* are the c.1903 stable block with hay loft and servants quarters. The stables have been converted to residential accommodation and are now referred to as 'the hermit's retreat'. It is constructed of rendered brick with a central double-storeyed block with loft and two small single-storeyed wings with hipped gable corrugated iron roofs. It is a substantial building incorporating former brick stabling, coach house, 'man's room', harness room, and loft.

## Hirschell

The house formerly known as *Hirschell* is a Victorian single storey house with substantial Edwardian additions and renovations. It is currently covered by HO469.

## Garage

The post-war brick double garage opens onto the carpark on the east, with the slope of the ground allowing two storeys attached on the west. The building is square, in light-coloured brick, with corrugated iron roof, and timber sashed windows with brick sills. A simple modern rounded canopy on the southern corner protects the doorway.

## Landscape Elements

Mature trees on the site appear to be remnants of the original gardens of the estates *Mononia* and *Greystroke*.

An outdoor statue of Mary on a Corinthian column and brick plinth stands in the garden and appears to have been added to the landscape separately to the church.

A modern metal 'flame' sculpture is fixed to the floor on the southwest corner of the church plaza and appears to be a part of the original setting of the church.

*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/>*