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# St Michael's Parish Hall

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## Location

268 High Street ASHBURTON, BOROONDARA CITY

## Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO922

## Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 29, 2022

### What is significant?

St Michael's Parish Hall 268 High Street, Ashburton, 1933, is significant. The 1940s additions contribute to the significance of the place, Additions and alterations to the building after 1947 are not significant. The grotto contributes to the historic setting of the place.

### How is it significant?

St Michael's Parish Hall is historically, architecturally and aesthetically significant to the City of Boroondara.

### Why is it significant?

St Michael's Parish Hall is historically significant as the first Roman Catholic church of St Michael's parish, Ashburton. The hall also served as the first parish school and was extended in 1947 at a time of significant post-war growth in Ashburton with the foundation and expansion of the Ashburton Housing Commission estate. Both the 1933 Hall and its 1940s extensions served as a multipurpose church and school until the construction of the new St Michael's Memorial Church nearby in 1953. (Criterion A)

St Michael's Parish Hall is a particularly fine and outstanding local example of a church hall from the interwar period in Boroondara. It demonstrates Romanesque styling and Christian decorative scheme applied to a church hall. It is particularly distinctive as a multipurpose church and school building from the interwar period, with its dual use evident in the fabric through the ecclesiastical facade to the street with Christian detailing, combined with the multipaned windows and side veranda typical of a school building. (Criterion D)

St Michael's Parish Hall, designed by PJ O'Connor in 1933, is aesthetically significant for its demonstration of Romanesque design, with Lombard band on the tower; arch and tympanum over the doorway; central wheel

window and dominant wall on the front facade, with moulded arched string courses on the piers. Other fine aesthetic elements include the different forms of cross motifs that testify to its former historical use as a church. The hall is also distinctive for its Spanish Mission influenced broad eaves formed by the overhanging pyramidal tower roof, and the projecting front clipped gable with timber brackets adding a touch of Arts & Crafts influence. (Criterion E)

St Michael's Parish Hall is significant for its association with the Roman Catholic community in Ashburton since the 1930, serving as the first church until the 1950s and later as the Parish Hall serving the adjacent primary school. (Criterion G)

Hermes Number 208929

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

St Michael's Parish Hall was built in a Romanesque Revival style with a Spanish Mission influence. It is of red brick with a tiled roof and faces onto High Street, with a rectangular plan entered via a tower. A row of windows runs along the eastern elevation, while to the western side a veranda runs the length of the original building.

The roof is a jerkin-head gable, with a terracotta stop for the ventilation ridge running along the ridgeline. The jerkin-head gable extends over the centre of the facade with timber eaves and brackets, adding an Arts & Crafts touch to the detailing. A cross sits atop the pyramidal cap of the tower, which is also roofed in terracotta tiles. The tower roof overhangs the walls with broad timber eaves. The roof and eave treatment demonstrates the Spanish Mission style much used by O'Connor. A brick Lombard Band runs under the eaves of the tower (Figure 8), which is more characteristic of Romanesque decorative treatment.

A wheel window is centrally located on the gabled facade, a detail that is typical of (Romanesque Italian) Lombardic architecture, with tracery of spokes radiating from the central boss which is moulded with an Alisee cross (commonly found in early Medieval art). The window is constructed of pressed cement. The Foundation Stone is located beneath this central wheel window (Figure 8).

Brick piers on the northeast corner are decorated with cement arch mouldings with Latin crosses (Figure 9). The details are repeated in the brick piers along the side of the building, with multipaned sash windows with painted concrete lintels and sills. Along the west side of the hall is a veranda supported on four slender concrete columns. Under the eaves runs a six-course continuous lintel. Two doors underneath sets of triple pivot sashes originally opened from the hall onto the veranda. At least one original sash window can be seen from the street at the west side of the tower. The door has been replaced with a modern timber and glazed door with side light, and unsympathetic contemporary door lights have been placed on either side of the entrance. A set of steps with a low concrete bannister leads from the street level to the door.

Cement moulded detail of a Cross Potent rising from foliage is located within the brick arched tympanum with keystone ornament. The wheel window is framed with four similar keystone ornaments.

There is a recent services box on the front facade adjacent to the steps, concealed by a timber slat screen (Figure 8). The hall is set within landscaped grounds to the north (front) facade and a small grotto at the eastern side (Figure 11). The grotto runs part way down the length of the hall and is separated from a rear carpark by a metal paling fence and gate. The site has otherwise been developed. The original low red brick fence has been partially demolished and replaced with a taller grey brick fence and black palisade gate, however a section of the red brick fence that connects the hall to the former presbytery on the corner remains towards the east. A concrete path and bluestone edging links the two through a garden, with a grotto encasing a statuette of the Virgin Mary.

*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/>*