

Former Free Presbyterian Church



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Masonic Lodge, former Presbyterian Church Source: "The Stepping Stone : A History of the Shire of Bannockburn" by Derek Beaurepaire. P127



Extent of registration map

Location

Midland Highway MEREDITH, Golden Plains Shire

Municipality

GOLDEN PLAINS SHIRE

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO131

Heritage Listing

Golden Plains Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

The former Free Presbyterian Church is located at 4450 Midland Highway, Meredith. The Free Presbyterians, the small Gaelic speaking branch of the denomination, erected the simple bluestone kirk in 1868. It was constructed by Brown and Pile at a cost of £600. William James Reid of Woodbourne laid the foundation stone in 1869. In the late 19th century, two factors led to the closure of the church. The first being a decline in local support for the Free Presbyterian denomination. The second, the financial pressure following the withdrawal of State Government aid, which saw the disposition of the land under the *State Aid to Religion Abolition Act of 1871*. The kirk remained unoccupied until it was leased to the Hopetoun Masonic Lodge No 163 in 1910. The chapter had previously moved from Morwell to Steiglitz in 1894, renting the Steiglitz Court House before moving to Meredith. By 1911 the name of the lodge was changed to Meredith Masonic Lodge No 163, with William Garfield Spiller of Lethbridge as Master. In 1961, as part of Centennial celebrations, the Temple was reconsecrated by Most Worshipful Brother John W. Connell. Despite efforts to secure the freehold ownership from the Presbyterian Church, it was not until 1961 that the Lodge acquired the site, constructing a new Temple adjacent to the north of the bluestone chapel.

How is it Significant?

The former Free Presbyterian Church is of historical, social and architectural significance to the Golden Plains Shire and the township of Meredith.

Why is it Significant?

The former Free Presbyterian Church is of historical significance for its role in providing the first permanent place of worship for the district's Free Presbyterians, the small Gaelic-speaking branch of the denomination, in 1868.

It also has further historical significance as providing a site for the Hopetoun Masonic Lodge No. 163 after the decline of the Steiglitz mining township in the late 19th century and later as a permanent temple for the Meredith Masonic Lodge No. 163.

The former Free Presbyterian Church has social significance as a representation of the collective aspirations of the local congregation of the Free Presbyterians, to establish a place of worship outside the larger Presbyterian denomination.

The former Free Presbyterian Church has architectural significance as a surviving bluestone kirk in the Gothic Revival style, dating from the early settlement of the Meredith township.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Golden Plains - Golden Plains Shire Heritage Study Phase 2, Heritage Matters P/L, 2009;
Hermes Number	23648
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The former Free Presbyterian Church is located on allotment Lot 1 TP844090 within the Parish of Meredith. The church is situated on the corner of Creamery Road and the Midland Highway, at the southern end of a dramatic *Cypressus Macrocarpa* (Monteray Cyrpress) Avenue, which signals the formal entrance into the township.

The simple Gothic Revival church is constructed of bluestone. It features a steep gabled roof clad with slate. It has three bays, divided by two buttresses, each with a lancet window, presently covered with vertical timber boards. The corner buttresses are cantered. A pair of lancet windows is located above the bluestone porch. The porch has a steep gabled roof clad with slate and a Waurn ponds stone tablet above the surviving double timber front door reads "Free Presbyterian Church 1869". The small lancet windows on the side elevations of the porch have also been replaced with vertical timber boards.

Remnant iron flashing, mortar lines and different weathering of the masonry above and below a previous gable line at the rear of the kirk strongly suggests a previous rear extension, probably a timber vestry. A small asbestos building has been relocated to the rear of the kirk and attached via a wasp-waist extension.

A large cream brick hall was constructed in the 1960s adjacent to the northern elevation of the kirk. It has a series of hopper casement windows on the northern elevation, beneath the eaves of the shallow pitched corrugated iron roof. A rear toilet block protrudes from the eastern elevation. [The interiors have not been inspected].

The church sits in a large allotment bare of any substantial planting other than a *Cedrus* (Cedar) located in front of the church on the road reserve and perimeter plantings of *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress).

Physical Description 2

Extent of Registration: To the extent of the whole of the original bluestone kirk and the 1960s cream brick temple, including the interiors, (excluding the rear asbestos supper room and toilet block) and the whole of the land being allotment Lot 1 TP844090, Parish of Meredith.

Historical Australian Themes

The Australian Heritage Commission devised the Australian Historic Themes in 2001. The following themes have influenced the historical development of the Former Free Presbyterian Church.

8 Developing Australia's Cultural Life

8.6 Worshipping

8.6.1 Worshipping together

8.6.2 Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies

8.6.4 Making places for worship

8.5 Forming associations

8.5.3 Associating for mutual aid

Integrity

The Church remains relatively intact with a high degree of integrity. The cream brick temple is in good condition with a high degree of integrity.

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/>