

# SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL



SACRED HEART  
CATHEDRAL SOHO 2008



1 sacred heart cathedral  
bendigo front view apr1997



After Photograph - Reference  
F3890 2016



Before Photograph -  
Reference F3890 2014



Before Photograph -  
Reference F3890 2014



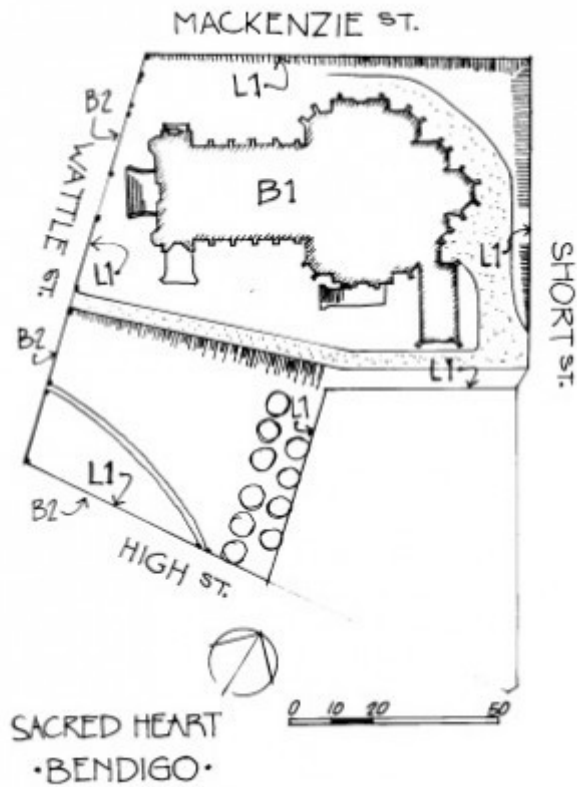
Before and After Photograph  
- Reference F3890 2015



During Photograph -  
Reference F3890 2015



During Photograph -  
Reference F3890 2015



sacred heart cathedral bendigo plan

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## Location

80 WATTLE STREET BENDIGO, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1340

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO288

## VHR Registration

September 4, 1997

## Heritage Listing

## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 13, 1999

What is significant?

It was originally intended that a Roman Catholic cathedral would one day be built on the site occupied by St Kilian's Church in McCrae Street, Bendigo. However land on one of the highest points of the city became available in Wattle Street which was part of the extensive estate of Rev. Father Dr Henry Backhaus (1811-1882), pioneer clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church, Bendigo.

Designed by Reed, Smart and Tappin, construction of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo commenced in 1896, with the foundations, and the aisle, the nave and lantern towers built by 1901. Work ceased for lack of funds in 1908, and it was not until 1954 that construction recommenced, with completion achieved in 1977. The church comprises a seven bay nave, narthex, crossing, apsidal sanctuary, three-bay transepts, and four octagonal chapels flanking the crossing. The exterior is dominated by a crossing tower and spire, and the west front with prominent flanking turrets. The interior features an oregon and kauri hammerbeam roof, west window by Hardman, and a divided organ built in 1904 by Bishop & Son, London. The floors, altars and font are crafted from a variety of marbles, and the pews are of blackwood. The twentieth century work was largely executed by sixteen craftsmen, most of whom were Italians brought to Australia expressly for the purpose.

How is it significant?

The Sacred Heart Cathedral is of architectural, historic, and aesthetic importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Sacred Heart Cathedral is architecturally important as Australia's largest provincial church. Constructed in sandstone and local granite in an authentic Decorated Gothic style, the church is significant as the only cathedral in the State to be completed in this style this century. It closely follows the original 1895 design of William Brittain Tappin (1854-1905) and the nave is an important legacy of some of the finest Victorian period ecclesiastical architecture in this country. The interior is architecturally important for its superb spatial proportions, fine hammerbeam roof, and monumental compound piers and arched arcades.

The Cathedral is aesthetically important as a landmark building set high on a grassy knoll. The Cathedral and its setting dominates High Street.

The Cathedral is also aesthetically important for its internal and external decorative detail. Significant fixtures and fittings include carved stonework, stained glass particularly that in the west window, blackwood pews, timber panelling, and the organ. Notable external fixtures include the cast aluminium spire gargoyles, decorative cast iron balustrading and lamps, door strap-hinges, and the perimeter fence. Important movable objects include the Stations of the Cross painted by prominent nineteenth century Italian ecclesiastical artist A.F.D. Cavallaro which are framed in ornately carved walnut timber, the eagle lectern a gift of Bendigo's quartz king, George Lansell, the Bishop's Chair with its associated chairs carved by Ferdinand Stuflesser from Austrian oak, and the McCormick baptismal font.

The Cathedral is historically important for its association with Rev Dr Henry Backhaus, pioneer clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church on the Bendigo goldfields, whose estate provided the land for the building. The Cathedral has further associations with Rev Martin Crane, first Bishop of Sandhurst from 1874-1901 who initiated the building of the cathedral and donated the west window; and with Bishops Stephen Reville (1901-1916), John McCarthy (1917-1950), and Bernard Stewart (1950-1979) who worked towards the completion of the building.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

#### EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMITS:

(Classes of works or activities which may be undertaken without a permit under Part 4 of the Heritage Act 1995)

In the Sacristy Building: all internal alterations which do not affect the exterior appearance of the building are permit exempt.

Construction dates	1896,
Architect/Designer	Reed, Smart & Tappin,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place, Registered object integral to a registered place,
Hermes Number	3311
Property Number	

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## History

### Contextual History:History of Place:

Gold was found in Bendigo in October 1851. In early April 1852, a few weeks after Wesleyan James Jeffrey had preached the first sermon on the diggings, the Rev. Father Henry Backhaus arrived and celebrated the first mass.

Backhaus had recently arrived in the colony from South Australia and soon afterwards was appointed the first Catholic Priest on the Victorian goldfields, by the Very Rev. Bonaventure Geoghegan, Vicar General of Melbourne. The son of a boot merchant, Backhaus had been an excellent student. Sent to Rome from his native

Paderborn in Prussia, he had taken a doctorate in divinity before he was twenty-five. William Howitt described him as 'a man of great liberality and learning'. He was also an outstanding pianist, a skilled practitioner of homoeopathic medicine, a clever businessman and an ecumenist. He soon won the respect of diggers of all creeds and walks of life. At first he conducted services in the open air, but by May 1852 he had set up Bendigo's first Catholic chapel in a tent. This was replaced by a bark and slab building made at a digger's working bee held in the vicinity of St Kilian's Church, in McCrae Street. In 1856 the hut was replaced by a sandstone church which cost £7500. Because of faulty construction it was demolished in 1888, and a temporary timber church designed by William Vahland was erected in its place. This particularly large church with its ornate German organ was intended to serve as a temporary pro-cathedral until such time that another stone building could be constructed. As the Diocese of Sandhurst had been established in March 1855, and the first Bishop of the Diocese, Rev. Martin Crane, consecrated in September 1885, many felt that the erection of a cathedral was long overdue. Dr Backhaus had accumulated a great deal of land around Bendigo and when he died in September 1882 he bequeathed to his Church of St Kilian a legacy in property estimated to be worth £100,000. He also stipulated that St Kilian's was not to be 'touched' (presumably demolished) until 1903.

#### History of Place:

It was originally intended that a cathedral would one day be built on the land occupied by St Kilian's church. However when the time came to contemplate the building of a cathedral, land on one of the highest points of Bendigo became available. Dr Backhaus had left a considerable estate to the church, part of which included the elevated land in McKenzie Street which was singularly appropriate for a building of cathedral stature. Today the land on which the cathedral stands is still owned by the Backhaus Estate, while the building belongs to the Sandhurst Diocese.

Commissioned in 1895 by Bishop Crane, the first Bishop of Sandhurst, the original design for the cathedral was by William Tappin, of Reed Smart and Tappin. A building contract was let to T. Cockram and Son in 1896 for the erection of the nave and side aisles. A loan of £15,000 from wealthy Bendigo mine owner George Lansell was obtained to finance the work. A foundation stone was laid on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June 1897. The contract was completed in 1901 and the building was formally opened by Cardinal Moran, Archbishop of Sydney on 29 September 1901. Work continued for a time under the second bishop, Bishop Stephen Reville, but upon the completion of the nave aisles, narthex and the western turrets (lantern towers) in 1908 major work stopped for many years.

In 1954 building was resumed by Bishop Bernard Stewart, the fourth bishop of Sandhurst. A steady and continuing increase in revenue from the Backhaus Estate was to make finance possible, particularly in the early stages of the second building phase. The original plans had been retained, and after an extensive tour of Europe by project architect Alan Ralton of Bates, Smart and McCutcheon to combine visits to Gothic cathedrals with a search for a labour force and a superintendent of works, detail work proceeded on the 1/8" scale drawings. The Harcourt granite foundations were uncovered and work commenced, with the first phase of the new work being to bring the foundations to floor level. Investigations of suitable stone sources resulted in a quarry being opened up at Ceres near Geelong. Known as Barrabool Hills sandstone, it was quarried and brought to Bendigo in large blocks for the payment of a small royalty. A crane and stone saw were set up on site, and the stone was sawn, dressed and built in by the assembled team of Italian stonemasons. Albert Segafredo, one of the original team of masons took over the position in 1960 and worked on the project until its completion. While Barrabool sandstone comprised the body of the cathedral, Mount Gambier limestone was employed widely in carvings and decorative work. Progress was limited by the funds available, this being about £50,000 per annum.

The work of many artists and craftsmen is embodied in this cathedral, which owes much to Bendigo's pioneer clergyman, Dr Henry Backhaus. He provided the land, the vision and the money to make the achievement possible.

#### Interior

Changes in liturgy arising from the Rome Ecumenical Conference caused changes in the original sanctuary layout; the main altar was brought forward from the rear wall, and the throne (bishop's chair) was moved to a central position behind the altar from its previous position on the north facing south wall. This modification did not allow sufficient room for a pulpit without obstructing sight lines from the congregation, so the pulpit was replaced by a second brass lectern cast from the original. Another alteration involved the elimination of seating in the side aisles which opened up vistas to the new altars in the Blessed Sacrament and Lady Chapels achieving a spaciousness not possible in the former plan for the cathedral. The new white marble floor in the transept and

sanctuary end of the building contrasted markedly with the old asphalt tile floor in the nave. After the aisle seats were removed it was decided to replace the tiles with marble. The old concrete floor underneath was replaced with a new concrete floor which necessitated the closure of the cathedral for one year. Existing blackwood pews were stripped and refinished and an electric heating system of pipes were fixed beneath the seats. The original incandescent lighting was replaced with high level indirect floodlights.

### The Spire

The use of Mount Gambier stone was not recommended for the spire because of the height and exposed position. Instead precast concrete panels reinforced with a steel mesh mounted on a steel frame with a veneer finish to match the Mount Gambier stone was used. Johns and Waygood fabricated the steel spire frame. They employed a 'sophisticated laser beam technique to maintain absolute verticality on site and to maintain the perfect octagonal plan at each platform level.' The three tonne cast bronze cross on top of the spire was ingeniously included in the frame erection process. The cornices and arcading around the base of the spire were made of Gosford stone, which is superior stone to Barrabool sandstone for dressed work and closer in colour to Mount Gambier. The spire gutters, flashings and downpipes are stainless steel, with the flat roof areas covered with lead. The striking gargoyles which discharge stormwater from the spire are made from cast aluminium, sculptured by Stanley Hammond and cast by Joe Lemmon.

### The Architects

William Brittain Tappin was the architect of the cathedral. He was born in Ballarat in 1854. For some time he was a partner in the firm of Tappin and Gilbert with offices in Ballarat and Melbourne. On the death of Joseph Reed in 1890 and in 1890 became a partner in the Melbourne firm, Bates, Smart and Tappin, which continues today as the well-known firm Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, the architects responsible for the completion of the work. William Tappin died in Melbourne in 1905. Apart from his architectural work Tappin became involved in the design of ecclesiastical decorative arts, designing the stencils behind the altar in St Patrick's Cathedral, and the shrine in St Francis's Church in Melbourne. He also wrote a paper entitled 'The Role of Art and Architecture' for the first Australian Catholic Congress which was held in Sydney in 1900.

Alan J. Ralton of Bates Smart & McCutcheon was the architect in charge from 1954 to 1962 and upon his death Frank Turner completed the cathedral and has designed the altars and new furnishings.

After a lapse of almost half a century, work on Sacred Heart Cathedral was resumed in 1954 under the supervision of Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, successors to the original architects.

Associated People:

## Extent of Registration

1. All the building, including external stairs and lanterns marked B1; the stone and iron boundary fence to Wattle and High Streets marked B2; on Diagram 604326 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the land marked L1 on Diagram 604326 held by the Executive Director, being all the land described in Crown Allotments 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and Crown Reserve 6089 (formerly known as Certificate of Title Vol. 2630 Folio 930) Section 5B, at Bendigo Parish of Sandhurst as well as all the land known as Certificate of Title Vol. 7818 Folio 182.
3. Fourteen Stations of the Cross located each side of the north and south aisles; (original) eagle lectern; the 'Bishop's Chair', consisting of screen and three associated chairs, located in the sanctuary; the McCormick baptismal font located in the Francis Xavier Chapel.

*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/>*