

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH



52940 St John s Anglican Digby 130

Location

3261 PORTLAND-CASTERTON ROAD, DIGBY, GLENELG SHIRE

Municipality

GLENELG SHIRE

Level of significance

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Listing

Glenelg Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is Significant?

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church is a small but fine brick church in the Early English Gothic Revival style. It is situated on the west side of the Portland-Casterton Road, Digby on a sloping site overlooking the Stokes River (or Emu Creek) and is surrounded by mature exotic trees. It was the first of many churches commissioned by Rev. Dr. F.T.C. Russell, an influential clergyman in the early history of Glenelg Shire. Construction commenced in 1861 and, although the architect is not known, it may have been James Fox of Hamilton. The builder was a Mr. Jolly. The church is built of locally made red brick, now painted, and timber cut from local forests. It has a steep gable roof of early short-sheeted corrugated iron. The rectangular plan has three bays but with no apse or porch. The church has lancet windows with significant stained glass made by Fergusson and Urie of Melbourne and installed in 1864. The timber front doors are surrounded by an unusual

Gothic arch framed with rock-faced stone quoins. The interior fittings and furnishings are particularly fine and reflect the Low Church values of its founder. They include a marble font, handwritten framed scripts (in Gothic lettering) and timber furnishings such as the pulpit, pews and font cubicle. The Church remains in very good condition with a very high degree of integrity.

How is it Significant?

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church is of historical, social and architectural significance to the State of Victoria and the Glenelg Shire.

Why is it Significant?

St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church and its setting are of historical significance for representing the early influence and importance of the Anglican Church in Digby and the district generally. It demonstrates the dedication of the local congregation and its clergymen to establishing and consolidating religious order in the far Western District of Victoria. It is of particular historical significance for its direct association with Rev. Dr. F. T. C. Russell and as the first of his many commissions. St. John's Anglican Church is of social significance as the continuous focus for the congregation of Digby for over 140 years. The church is of architectural significance for its simple, almost austere use of the Gothic Revival style and the interiors are of particular architectural significance for reflecting the values and prosperity of the congregation.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Glenelg - Glenelg Heritage Study Stage Two (a), Heritage Matters, 2006; Glenelg - Glenelg Shire Heritage Study Part One, Carlotta Kellaway, David Rhodes Mandy Jean, 2002;
Other Names	ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST ANGLICAN CHURCH, ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
Hermes Number	52940
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

St John's Anglican Church is a simple but fine church building in the Early English Gothic Revival style. The church is built of red brick, now painted pale blue. It is aligned east-west with the front door in the west wall, facing liturgical west and away from the main road. The steep roof of 60-degrees is made of short sheets of early corrugated iron placed in three rows. There is a stone cross on the east end of the ridge. The tall building has a rectangular plan of three bays with no apse or porch. The site slopes away from the road, towards the northwest. The building is raised on a brick plinth.

The front door of two leaves is made of timber laid on the diagonal on a standard ledge and brace frame. The unusual entrance has rock-faced bluestone quoins and voussoirs around the opening. There are two cement rendered or concrete steps. High on the west wall there are three lancet windows, the central window being taller and wider than the side windows. The windows have glass in a diaper pattern, and have rendered sills and arches of stretcher bricks. Above the windows, there is a nimbus-shaped vent in the centre, high in the gable. There are metal ties across and along the building. The east wall, facing the main road, has three similar lancet windows with stained glass. The central window depicts a full length figure of St John the Evangelist while the side windows incorporate symbols of the evangelists and the Agnes Dei within traditional geometric designs. The windows are placed lower on the east than on the west side. The wall also has a nimbus-shaped vent above the windows and two metal ties across the facade. The north and south walls have three pairs of lancet windows with diaper-patterned glass. The bays are divided by stepped buttresses of brick with three rendered capping stones.

The interior of the church is very simple and reflects evangelical or Low Church values. The fine timber furnishings include: a communion table, two alter chairs, the pulpit, the lectern, a communion rail, and pews with fleur-de-lis shaped ends. The interior fittings also include a marble font, inscribed in memory of Rev F. T. C. Russell, and framed hand-painted scripts on the walls of the sanctuary. The scripts are written in Gothic lettering and include the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. In the northwest corner, there is a dark stained timber

cubicle with carved details enclosing the marble font. The roof has been lined with dark stained timber ceiling boards and is likely to be supported by a system of scissor trusses.

There are a number of mature exotic trees on the site including a *Quercus robur* (English Oak), *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian Cypress or Pencil Pine) and a *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island Palm).

Historical Australian Themes

8. DEVELOPING AUSTRALIA'S CULTURAL LIFE

8.6: Worshipping

8.6.1: Worshipping together

8.6.2: Maintaining religious traditions and ceremonies

8.6.3: Founding Australian religious institutions

8.6.4: Making places for worship

8.6.5: Evangelising

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 data owner.

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