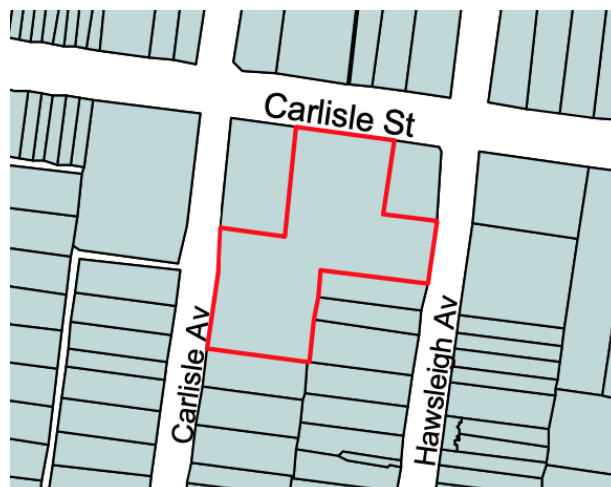
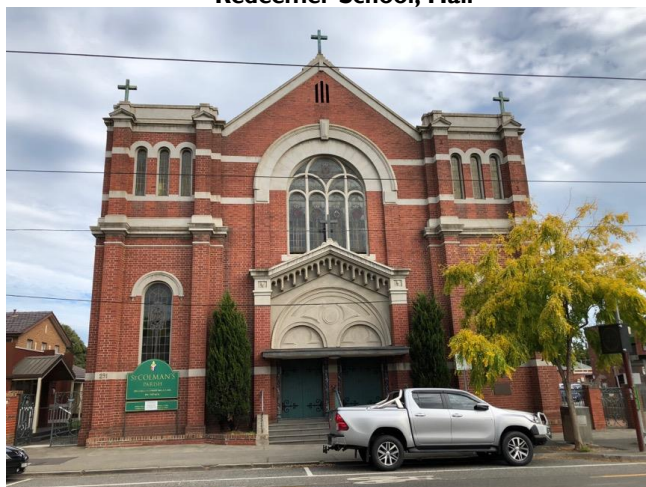


City of Port Phillip Heritage Review

Place name: St Colman's Catholic Church and School

Citation No:
2441

Other names: Church of the Holy Angels, Holy Redeemer School, Hall



Address: 291 Carlisle Street, Balaclava

Heritage Precinct: Carlisle Street (East)

Category: Religion: Church and School/Hall

Heritage Overlay: HO75

Style: Interwar: Romanesque

Graded as: Significant

Constructed: 1929, 1964 (Church), 1938-39, 1965 (School/Hall)

Victorian Heritage Register: No

Designer: Charles D. Rose (Church), Laurence Holzer (School/Hall), S.J. Moran (Church and School/Hall additions)

Amendment: TBA

Comment: Revised citation

Significance

What is significant?

St Colman's Catholic Church complex, 291 Carlisle Street, Balaclava is significant. Contributory features are:

- The church designed by Charles D. Rose and built in 1929, and the additions designed by S.J. Moran in 1963-64.
- The school and hall designed by Laurence Holzer and built in 1938-39, and the additions designed by S.J. Moran in 1965.
- The brick fence with wrought iron gates between the church and school/hall and the Italian Cypress row (*Cupressus sempervirens*) behind, and the pair of Italian cypresses adjacent to the school and hall entrance.

Other alterations and additions to the above buildings and other buildings on the site are not significant.

How is it significant?

St Colman's Catholic Church complex, Balaclava is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

St Colman's Catholic Church complex is historically and socially significant as evidence of the growth of St Kilda and Balaclava during the interwar period, which resulted in the need for new and larger churches and schools to serve the growing congregations. The additions made to both buildings are associated with improvements made to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the parish in 1962. The school illustrates the importance placed upon education by the Catholic diocese in Victoria and is associated with the significant development of Catholic educational facilities in the early twentieth century. It is representative of a Catholic parish centre comprising a church and school and has social value as a place that has served the community for almost 100 years. (Criteria A, D & G)

St Colman's church is of aesthetic significance as a fine example of a Romanesque Revival Church. Built in red brick, with this relieved in places with rendered bands on walls and rendered detailing around window and door openings, its façade is well-composed demonstrating a strong symmetry with its broad pedimented central bay, flanked by narrower bays that once formed the base of the pair of domed spires of the church. Semi-circular arched wall openings, synonymous with the Romanesque Revival-style, are used for windows in a variety of sizes and groupings. Despite the loss of the domed spires, and other alterations and additions to the church to the rear, St Colman's still is a fine example of the Romanesque Revival-style applied to a church. (Criterion E)

St Colman's school and hall is of aesthetic significance as a complementing element in the larger St Colman's ecclesiastical complex. Its finely detailed Romanesque Revival-style façade shares similar materiality and detailing with the adjacent church and its tower retains its arcaded upper portion capped by a zinc dome. (Criterion E)

As a pair, the church and school/hall form a fine streetscape of inter-war architecture, which is complemented by the brick fences and Italian cypresses. They demonstrate the continued preference with religious organisations and other institutions for historicism on their public buildings, in the face of the growing popularity of the Modern Movement with other organisations and sections of the community. (Criterion E)

Thematic context

Victoria's framework of historical themes

8. Building community life: 8.1 Maintaining spiritual life

Port Phillip thematic environmental history

8. Community life: 8.1 Spiritual life, 8.2 Educating

History

Contextual history

The Roman Catholic Church was the second largest denomination in Victoria in the nineteenth century and remained so until 1971, when it became the largest. The development of the church was assisted by several religious orders including the Loreto Sisters, Brigidine Sisters, Carmelites and the Christian Brothers, which established convents, priories and schools.

In the City of Port Phillip, the foundation churches were Sts Peter and Paul, South Melbourne and St Mary's, St Kilda. The parish of Sts Peter and Paul was formed in 1854 and the first church was a large tent, which also served as a school for local children. This was replaced in 1856 by the first brick church. The foundation stone of the current church was laid in 1869, the presbytery was added in 1876 and a girls' school was commenced in 1888.

St Mary's was the first Catholic parish in St Kilda and Prahran. In 1869, the Brighton Mission was attached to St Kilda, encompassing all the land south to Port Phillip Heads and east to the Bunyip River on the borders of Gippsland. The area bordered by Chapel Street, Westbury Street, Dandenong Road and Alma Road was set aside by the government for church development and St Mary's Catholic Church was built in this area in 1853, but the steady development of the 'aristocratic neighbourhood' surrounding it soon led to the development of a bluestone church, which was blessed and opened in 1871. In 1887, it was the first Catholic parish church consecrated in Victoria.

In 1887, a new mission was created from St Mary's at 'West St Kilda', which became the Sacred Heart Parish. At the same time, South Yarra was separated from St Mary's. In 1912 Balaclava, comprising that suburb and Elsternwick was made a separate parish and in 1925 was subdivided again with Elsternwick becoming a separate parish. The growth of Elwood led to the creation of another parish in the City of Port Phillip, St Columba's, in 1918.

Catholic schools

The status of St Kilda as a desirable residential area in the late nineteenth century led to the establishment of several private schools and in 1891 St Kilda and Hawthorn contained nearly thirty private schools between them, the highest proportion per head of population in Melbourne (Peel 1999:47). Several of these were within St Kilda East including All Saints' Grammar School, Alma Road Grammar School, Fairelight Ladies' College, The Priory Ladies' College, Wattle House School and Cumloden College. Most, however, were relatively short-lived and some were closed during the economic depression of the 1890s when enrolments in private schools fell dramatically. Further closures followed the introduction of the *Education Act* in 1910, which saw the opening of new State secondary schools and imposed new costly regulations upon private schools, leading to the number of independent schools falling from 945 in 1898 to almost half that number in 1912 (Peel 1999:60).

The Catholic Church continued to provide its own schools alongside the State system. Included amongst them were St. Mary's, St. Kilda (1854), St. Peter and St. Pauls, Emerald Hill (1854), St. Vincent de Paul's orphanage, Emerald Hill (1857) and St. Joseph's, Sandridge (1857). By 1940, Catholic sponsored education in South Melbourne was making an important contribution to secondary schooling with the Christian Brothers' College in Park Street, the Brigidene Convent High School for girls in Beaconsfield Parade and the Loreto Convent in Albert Park. A technical school was founded in Bank Street in 1924 and a Domestic Arts school at St. Peter and Paul's orphanage in 1937. A women teachers' college was also in operation at Albert Park.

As noted by Bourke (1988:160) education was the cornerstone of policy enacted by Archbishop Carr who served from 1839 to 1899:

There was no future for the Catholic Church, or indeed for any other religion, unless the children were given a thorough religious education not only in the home and in the church, but at school.

According to Bourke (1988:160) Carr constantly stressed that religious instruction 'could not be done sufficiently at home, nor in one hour on Sunday; it had to be given daily at school'. Between 1887 and 1907 the Catholic Church spent over £500,000 on parish schools and other educational buildings and as Bourke concludes 'even if all the records should be lost, the bricks and mortar which remain of his schools and of their extensions would bear mute and lasting witness to his policy' (Bourke, 1988:161-2).

St Colman's Catholic Church and School

The original parish of Balaclava, established by Archbishop Carr in July 1912, included the suburbs of Elsternwick and Balaclava. It contained two churches, St Joseph's Elsternwick, built in 1898 as a 'church-of-

ease' from Gardenvale parish and Holy Angels, Balaclava, built in 1900 as a 'church-of-ease' from St Mary's, St Kilda East. The first presbytery was in McWhae Avenue, St Kilda East (St Colman's Jubilee Brochure).

Following the creation of the Balaclava parish the foundation stone for a new brick Holy Angels church was laid in August 1913 and the new church was opened by the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Dr. Carr on 30 December 1913 (Bomford). This church was on the south side of The Avenue, Balaclava.

Due to significant population growth after World War One, St Joseph's, Elsternwick became a separate parish in 1925 and in the following year a new presbytery for the Balaclava parish was built on the present site in Carlisle Street. The revised Balaclava parish boundaries were Inkerman Street, Kooyong Road, Glen Eira Road and Brighton Road/High Street (now St Kilda Road) (St Colman's Jubilee Brochure).

With the continuing growth in the surrounding suburbs a larger church became necessary and the foundation stone for the new church on the present site adjacent to the presbytery was laid by his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, Most Rev. Dr. Mannix on 16 June 1929. The Church of the Holy Angels, Balaclava was later opened by Archbishop Mannix on Sunday, 1 December 1929. The cost of was £10,914, and the parish debt was £8,800. Charles D. Rose was the architect, and the builder was R.V. Ritchie (*Advocate*, 20 June 1929, p.22, 5 December 1929, p.18).

In 1938-39 the parish centre in Carlisle Street was completed with building of the new Holy Redeemer School on the east side of the presbytery. The new school was blessed and opened by Archbishop Mannix on Sunday 11 June 1939. The need for the new school was described in article in the *Advocate*:

The old school was in an inconvenient position on the borders of another parish. The attendance decreased to 80 children, and it was felt the time had arrived to erect a new school in a more central position. The change had well justified itself, and already 155 children had enrolled at the new school. More pupils were expected later. The stage had been so constructed that it could be used as an additional classroom, if necessary. The school hall cost £5189, which was under the contract price, and an additional £250 had been spent in extra works. Two properties had also been purchased for £3300 to provide for an adequate playground for the children. Against the debt they had a good asset in the old school. (Advocate, 15 June 1939, p.9)

Laurence Holzer was the architect (*The Age*, 27 August 1938, p.27) and Reynold Bros. was the builder. Internally, the building contained a hall on the ground floor and classrooms above.

With the parish centre complete the decision was made in September 1939 to change the name of the parish from Holy Angels to St Colman's (*Advocate* 7 September 1939, p.4).



St Colman's Church and School – note the front fence (n.d.) (Source: St Colman's Jubilee Brochure)



St Colman's Church – original church interior at left and presbytery at right (n.d.) (Source: St Colman's Jubilee Brochure)

The parish celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1962 and in that year began a campaign to raise money for additions to the church and school, and renovations to the presbytery. At the time, the church was described as 'still unfinished' and 'inadequate', while the school required additional classrooms to replace temporary classrooms in the hall and improvements to staff and student amenities. A brochure noted:

If our parish is to fulfil that vital role of bringing Christ and His grace to all Catholics living within its boundaries, we must have adequate and worthy buildings in which to worship God, educate our children, and conduct parish activities in general. (St Colman's Jubilee Brochure)

The additions to the church were carried out in 1963-64 at a cost of £29,000. The church was extended at the south end to create an enlarged sanctuary and (on the east side) the priest's sacristy and altar services rooms accessed from the sanctuary via a small lobby, with an office, side altar and lady chapel on the east side. To the rear of the church a new toilet block and shelter shed for the school was built adjacent to the Carlisle Avenue boundary in 1964. Finally, a three-storey addition to the school was completed in 1965 at a cost of £14,200. Levels two and three each contained a classroom, while the ground level was partly open with a Sister's Room and Office at one side. S.J. Moran was the architect for all these works, and M.P. Arbon was the builder (BP). The presbytery was also renovated, and additions made including at the front of the building, which concealed the original façade.



Plan showing the additions to the church (red line indicates original extent of old church) (Source: St Colman's Jubilee Brochure)

In 1977 the towers of the church were removed. Repairs to large window above the entrance to the church were also carried out (BP).

From 2002 to 2005 the school buildings were used by the King David School to temporarily house their students from Years 3 to 6. The King David School is a progressive Jewish day school, which was established in the 1970s by educationalists, Rabbis and members of Temple Beth Israel in Alma Road, St Kilda (The King David School website).

References

Bomford, Janette, 'The spirit of St Kilda: Places of worship in St Kilda'.

<http://skhs.org.au/SKHSchurches/churches.htm>, viewed 19 July 2021

Bourke, Father D.F., *A history of the Catholic Church in Victoria*, 1988

Cooper, John Butler, *The History of St. Kilda from its first settlement to a City and after 1840-1930*, City of St. Kilda, Melbourne, 1931, vol. I,

The King David School website, <https://www.kds.vic.edu.au/our-history/> viewed 27 July 2021

Lewis, Miles (ed.), *Victorian Churches. Their origins, their story and their architecture*, National Trust, 1991

Peel, Victoria, *St Michael's Grammar School. A study in educational change*, 1999

Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History (TEH) Version 1, July 2020

'St Colman's Balaclava Sacrificial Offering Campaign 1962-65' (St Colman's Jubilee Brochure), n.d.

St. Kilda Council building permits nos. 7438, 12 March 1929 (church); 10021, 14 October 1938

(school/hall); 57/2931, 7 October 1963 (additions to church); U.388, 4 August 1964 (toilet block, shelter shed); U.650, 11 January 1965 (additions to school); 6559, 4 August 1977 (demolition of church towers)

Description

St Colman's is a Catholic church and school complex at the corner of Carlisle Street and Carlisle Avenue. It was developed from the early twentieth century, however the two landmark buildings on the site facing Carlisle Street are of interwar origin.

St Colman's Church is at the west of the site, adjacent to Carlisle Avenue. It is built of brick and designed in a Romanesque Revival-style. The façade is symmetrically composed with a steep pediment above a broad central bay flanked by narrower projecting bays, all of which conceal the large slate tile gable roof of the church. The narrower bays formed the base of the spires that have since been removed. The spires were of a similar scale and detailing to the existing spire upon the St Colman's School.

The main entrance is in the central bay in a breakfront with a rendered pediment with expressive detailing. A cantilvered awning has been added above the entrance doors obscuring semi-circular arched wall openings that are spanned by a larger semi-circular arched moulding. Slender marble columns flank each entrance. Wrought iron railings are fitted to the sides of the steps leading to the entrance.

Above the entrance is a large semi-circular arched stained-glass window, divided into smaller arched openings with tracery, and framed by a larger arched form, both of which are rendered from their springing lines. At the apex of the pediment are three narrow recesses. The pediment is surmounted by a render or stone crucifix. Small crucifixes are also fitted to the tops of the narrow bays. Much of the facade is finished in red brick, relieved in places with bands of render, with these bands in the central bay forming the springing lines and cills of the three narrow semi-circular arched stained-glass windows of the side bays. Beneath these windows on the side bays, below a rendered cornice, is a larger and deeper arched stained-glass window. The bays are framed by brick piers, rendered with bands on their shafts, and at their tops with a deep band with small pediments.

The west side of the church is visible from Carlisle Avenue, and its elevation is divided into bays by relatively plain brick buttresses. The first bay closest to Carlisle Street is the base of one of the former spires and shares similar detailing as the narrow bay at front (see description above). The remainder of the

west side elevation was divided into six bays, but the central bay, which originally had a confessional with a pediment has been remodelled with a flat roof form. The two end bays to the south have been extended with flat roof additions in the 1960s, built in a pressed red brick similar to the church. The remainder of the original bays that are extant have pairs of semi-circular arched stained-glass windows set in a broader rendered arched moulding. The east elevation of the church has similar massing, materiality and detailing as the west elevation, but is more intact, although the confessional has also been remodelled with a flat roof in a similar manner to the confessional on the west elevation.

The rear of the church was also extended in the 1960s, and the gable roof of the original roof was extended with a hip roof form above the addition. The elevation of the central portion is a half-lozenge form, with narrow windows at its side containing the sanctuary; and east and west of this are low cuboid masses containing the Priest's Sacristy and the Collector's Sacristy. Relatively austere in character, they do complement the materiality of the 1920s church.

St Colman's School is of a similar materiality and detailing to the church, but its façade is asymmetrically composed. The detailing of the entrance references the entrance of the church, but in a more restrained manner. The windows are a tripartite arrangement of a broad round-headed arch flanked by two smaller round-headed arches. The school retains its tower with its zinc dome and cross atop. At the base of the tower below an arched head window with a label mould is the foundation stone. In contrast to the Romanesque Revival-styling of the remainder of the school and its round headed arches, one stage of the spire has a loggia of pointed arched openings. The hall has a shallow setback behind a low wrought iron fence on a rendered base. The entry is flanked by Italian Cypressess (*Cupressus sempervirens*) An addition has been made on the west side toward the rear.

The church and the hall are connected by a brick fence along the frontage. This is constructed of red brick with a clinker brick base, a tapestry brick band and a clinker brick soldier course on tapestry brick base along the top. The expressed piers have similar detailing with rendered dome tops. There are ornate wrought iron vehicle and pedestrian gates. Behind this fence is a row of Italian Cypressess.

Both the church and school form an impressive complex of religious buildings within Port Phillip.

Comparative analysis

Romanesque, a Medieval style, prevailed throughout Europe immediately prior to the Gothic. It is characterised by the use of rounded arches on fenestration, in the arcading of naves, and for various decorative purposes. Red brick is commonly used in the style, with this relieved in places with render and stone. Its use of masonry gives the buildings a weightiness and robust character. The style, which grew popular in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century with the works of H.H. Richardson and others, saw the style's application expand from ecclesiastical architecture to commercial and other applications, as did the Gothic-style around this same time.

Despite the loss of the domed spires, and other alterations and additions to the church to the rear, St Colman's Church is a fine example of a Romanesque Revival Church. Built in red brick, with this relieved in places with rendered bands on walls and rendered detailing around window and door openings, its façade is well-composed demonstrating a strong symmetry with its broad pedimented central bay, flanked by narrower bays that once formed the base of the pair of domed spires of the church. Semi-circular arched wall openings, synonymous with the Romanesque Revival-style, are used for windows in a variety of sizes and groupings.

St Colman's Church is complemented by the School and Hall. Its finely detailed Romanesque Revival-style façade shares similar materiality and detailing and its tower retains its arcaded upper portion capped by a zinc dome. As a pair, the church and school form a fine streetscape of inter-war architecture, which is complemented by the brick fences and Italian cypresses. They demonstrate the continued preference with religious organisations and other institutions for historicism on their public buildings, in the face of the growing popularity of the Modern Movement with other organisations and sections of the community.

As a twentieth century church complex in the Romanesque style, St Colman's compares well with St Columba's Catholic Church and School, Elwood (1929, Citation 334), and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church complex, Middle Park (1929, Citation 1120). St Columba's and Our Lady were both designed by the prolific church architect, A.A. Fritsch.

Assessment

This place has been assessed in accordance with the processes and guidelines outlined in the Australia ICOMOS *Charter for Places of Cultural Heritage Significance* (The Burra Charter) 2013, using the Hercon criteria.

Recommendations

Retain in the Heritage Overlay with external paint controls. Retain internal controls, but specify that they apply only to the church. Apply front fence and tree controls (to apply to the Italian cypresses only).

Primary source

Peter Andrew Barrett, *H07 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct heritage review Stage 2: Review of existing heritage citations*, 2021

Other studies

Andrew Ward & Associates, *City of Port Phillip Heritage Review*, 1998

Robert Peck von Hartel Trethowan, *St Kilda 20th century architectural study*, Volume 3, 1992

Other images

