Local Heritage Places

Heritage Citation

Murlough Villa

Key details

Addresses	At 8 Brighton Terrace, Sandgate, Queensland 4017
Type of place	House
Period	Victorian 1860-1890
Style	Queenslander
Lot plan	L1_RP49389
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — June 2008
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
People/associations	Father James Connolly (Occupant)
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

‘Murlough Villa’ is a traditional timber and tin residence which was built circa 1882 for Father James Connolly, the first Catholic parish priest of Sandgate. As the parish priest, Father Connolly was a well known and influential person in Sandgate, which developed rapidly in the late 19th century as a popular seaside destination.

History

This traditional timber and tin 19th century home was built in 1882 for Father James Connolly, the first resident priest of the local Sandgate Catholic parish. As the parish priest, Father Connolly was a well known and influential person in the Catholic community of Sandgate, which developed rapidly in the late 19th century as a popular seaside destination.

The first Catholic Mass at Sandgate was performed by Father Patrick Dunne in 1865 in a house in what is now Eagle Terrace. Prior to this, the few Catholic families living at Sandgate would take their children to Brisbane to be baptised. Visiting Catholic priests continued to celebrate mass at Sandgate until 1880 when Father James Connolly was appointed as the local priest. The first Sandgate Catholic Church, the Church of the Sacred Heart, was opened in Brighton Road by the Bishop of Hobart on 25 September 1881. It was built, like so many Brisbane Catholic churches, on a prime elevated site with fine views. With the arrival of the railway to Sandgate in 1882, the population would increase and it was anticipated that a larger church would be required in the not too distant future.

Father Connolly, an Irish priest who was educated in France, arrived in Queensland in the 1860s. He travelled on horseback to the Catholic families of the Logan and Gold Coast areas before being appointed as the first Catholic priest of Cleveland Bay (Townsville) in 1871. According to a history written by the Sacred Heart Parish, Father Connolly allegedly requested a transfer to southern Queensland for health reasons after catching a ‘miner’s fever’ on the Townsville goldfields. After arriving in Sandgate, he initially lived in a hut on the site of the present convent in Brighton Road.

In 1881, with capital allegedly from investments in Townsville’s gold mines, Father Connolly purchased a corner block of land in Brighton Terrace overlooking the sea. The parish history, published in 1980, reproduced the following description from a contemporary newspaper article:

Fr. Connolly has now at his own expense completed a really beautiful residence at a short distance from the church. It is situated about half a mile from the centre of the town on a terrace commanding a splendid view of Moreton Bay…. Fr. Connolly cherishes fond recollections of his native Murlough in County Donegal, and he has accordingly called his new residence “Murlough Villa” and it so happens that in both cases the name is thoroughly appropriate and descriptive: Murlough meaning a small bay, or a bay within a bay.

In 1890, Sacred Heart Church celebrated the jubilee anniversary of Father Connolly’s priesthood and began planning for a new church to accommodate the growing congregation as well as a new presbytery and the conversion of the old church into a convent school. Father Connolly promised to donate the proceeds of the sale of his home in Brighton Terrace towards achieving these goals. The new presbytery was opened in 1890. In addition to the ?700 from the sale of ‘Murlough Villa’, Father Connolly apparently contributed another ?600 towards the cost of the marble altar, stained glass windows and remaining debt on the church. The new Church of the Sacred Heart opened in 1892.

Father Connolly oversaw many significant developments in the Catholic parish of Sandgate. In addition to the key role he played in providing the new church, Father Connolly also encouraged the arrival of the Mercy Nuns in 1893 to open a parish school, providing them with a new convent at his own expense by the following year. He

died in 1907 and was succeeded by his assistant, Rev. James Power.

Ownership of Father Connolly's property in Brighton Terrace was transferred to nominated trustees in 1892 before being sold in 1903. It was purchased by Frances Calow, wife of Alfred Calow, a public servant. The Calows joined other middle-class families who had settled or had holiday homes in Brighton Terrace since the 1880s. Brighton Terrace was home to several well-to-do residents with backgrounds in commerce and industry, including the Phelans, the Agnews and the Carmichaels. Sandgate became a popular seaside resort boasting sailing regattas, promenades on the foreshores and bathing boxes for the crowds attracted by holiday activities on the beach.

Two years later, the Calows sold 'Murlough Villa'. It would change hands several times over the succeeding decades. Despite the addition of a small wing on the northern side of the house prior to 1946 and the enclosure of the verandahs, the house is still recognisable as the 1880s home of Father Connolly. It is significant for this association as well as for its aesthetic value and the evidence it provides of the historical development of Sandgate as a salubrious seaside location.

Description

This moderately sized timber and tin residence has a central pyramidal roof form with a short ridge and stepped gently curved convex verandah roofs. It has a brick chimney with simple detailing on the southern side and a central front door leading down half a dozen steps to the front path. A pre-1946 (? Interwar) timber garage with a corrugated iron roof is sited near the rear boundary.

The original rectangular plan with wrap-around verandahs has been altered to an "L" shaped footprint by a small (pre-1946) addition on the northern side of the house. The central front door leads down half a dozen steps to the front path.

The verandahs have been enclosed, possibly during the Interwar period, and now have glass louvres and casement and sliding windows. The diamond detailing on the enclosed verandah walls has a 1950s aesthetic. Despite these changes, common to Brisbane houses, 'Murlough Villa' is still easily recognisable as a traditional 1880s residence.

A mature frangipani tree close to the house on the southern boundary adds to the aesthetic appearance of the house.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014.* It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

as an 1880s middle-class residence which demonstrates the development of Sandgate as a popular seaside resort in the late nineteenth century.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a substantially intact timber and tin house with graceful proportions, symmetry, and simple detailing situated on a prominent corner block.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a house built for Father James Connolly, the first resident Catholic priest of Sandgate.

References

1. Brisbane City Council Water Supply and Sewerage Detail Plan 1954
2. Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Certificates of Title
3. Martin, Father Denis. *The Sacred Heart Parish Sandgate 1880-1980*. Sandgate: Sacred Heart Parish, 1980
4. O'Leary, J.A. *A Catholic Miscellany*. South Brisbane Presbytery, St Josephs, 1914
5. Queensland Post Office Directories
6. Judy Gale Rechner, *Brisbane House Styles 1880 to 1940: a guide to the affordable house*, Brisbane: Brisbane History Group Studies No. 2, 1998

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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