

Heritage Citation



Old Friary Complex

Key details

Also known as	Brookfield Centre for Christian Spirituality
Addresses	At 139 Brookfield Road, Kenmore Hills, Queensland 4069
Type of place	Chapel, Residence (group), Institutional / group housing
Period	Victorian 1860-1890, Interwar 1919-1939, Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	Bungalow, California Bungalow, Ecclesiastical, Free Gothic
Lot plan	L8_RP826292; L6_RP826292
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 December 2017 Date of Citation — December 2017
People/associations	Merrin and Cranston (Architect); Richard Gailey (Architect)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (A) Historical; (C) Scientific; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association; (H) Historical association

The Old Friary complex comprises three significant buildings - the main house, St Clare's Cottage and the Friary Chapel. The main house is part of Richard Gailey's 'Glen Olive' relocated from Toowong in 1924 as a family home. In 1932 it became St John's House of Rest for Aged Men run by the Church of England Order of St Francis. Two years later, the house was converted to a Farm School for wayward boys. 'St Christopher's Lodge' was run with the assistance of the Order of St Clare and a cottage was built on the property for them in 1936. By 1959 some of the property had been sold and the Farm School closed. The former St John's Home/St Christopher's Lodge continued to be used for camps by the Comrades of St George, a youth mission group, until 1965, when two Franciscan brothers arrived in Brisbane from England to establish a Franciscan House. In 1966, St Christopher's Lodge became their Friary. The brothers ran a self-sufficient farm and manufactured hand-made pottery as well as offering practical help, rehabilitation and retreat to the community. In 1971, Merrin & Cranston designed the chapel which was built on the property by Henry Clark & Sons. After the friars left, the house and grounds were restored by volunteers and from 1991 the complex operated as the Brookfield Centre for Christian Spirituality, running workshops and retreats.

History

This former friary complex was established on land which was purchased in 1876 by Charles Patterson, an early timber merchant. The property, then an area of 47 acres was used for timber-getting until 1910 when William Melbourne Watts bought Patterson's land. William Watts was Queensland's Land Commissioner from 1891-1919, having worked at the Department of Lands since the age of 12. During his working life Watts resided in the Milton-Toowong area and on his retirement in 1919 he moved to Manly.

In 1924 Watts purchased Dr E. S. Jackson's house 'Glen Olive' which had been offered for sale for removal. This "enormous wooden building" had been "built in sections" and was "sold in sections." Dr E. S. Jackson had purchased 'Glen Olive' in 1901 which had been architect Richard Gailey's showcase residence at Toowong, built in 1890-91.

Richard Gailey is one of Brisbane's most well-known architects. Born in Donegal in 1834 he came to Brisbane in 1864 and decided to settle. Gailey set up his own practice in 1865 and eventually, according to Watson & Mackay, had "the longest and most productive practice of any Brisbane architect." He is best known for designing gracious and beautiful hotels, such as the Regatta and the Orient; the Baptist Tabernacle and smaller Baptist churches, the now Governors' residence 'Fernberg', 'Moorlands' at the Wesley Hospital Auchenflower, and the Brisbane Girls Grammar School to name a few. Gailey died in 1924 aged 91.

His house 'Glen Olive' was a grand villa built in 1890-91 on the 165 acre Lang Farm Estate purchased by Gailey in 1876. The beautiful landmark building featured a ballroom-sized lounge and extensive verandahs, a large atrium surmounted by a turret filled with coloured glass and multiple rooms surrounded by covered verandahs.¹

Only a section of the Gailey house was relocated and reconstructed onto Watts' land. Advertisements for the sale of Glen Olive and reports of the sale suggest it was sold in sections and for building materials. William Melbourne Watts' property was transferred to his son, William Phillips Watts in 1925. William Phillips Watts was an accountant who married in 1916 and appears to have lived in Gympie. Twenty-four and a half acres of Watts'

property was transferred to the Brisbane Franciscan Communities in 1933.

On 4 June 1932, St John's House of Rest for aged men was opened on almost 25 acres on a hilltop in the "beautiful Brookfield district". The home was reported to be a commodious wooden building "which formerly belonged to Dr E.S. Jackson of Toowong". Divided into three large wards with a large dining room and staff rooms, the home was established by Anglican Reverend Robert Bates, along with an Order of nuns, the 'Daughters of St Clare', to continue the tradition of care for the less fortunate modelled by Saint Francis of Assisi. Intended to accommodate 26 inmates, St John's House of Rest for aged men was to be a counterpart to a home for aged and infirm women opened by the 'Daughters of St Clare' in Wickham Terrace the previous year. The purchase of both homes was made possible "by an anonymous benefactress".

St John's House of Rest was intended to be a self-supporting place of refuge for about 30 aged men, with those who were able, to assist in the cultivation of the land. Reverend Bates intended to establish a home for aged ladies also on this beautiful site, a sisterhood, a chapel and perhaps a children's home. However it was soon found that Brookfield was too remote to suit the needs of aged men and St John's Home of Rest was transferred to Toowong in 1934. St John's House became a boys' home - St Christopher's Lodge, where a report published in *The Telegraph* on 3 March 1934 stated, "boys whose circumstances are adverse, through no fault of their own, may have the opportunity of developing in a happy atmosphere, surrounded by those religious, moral and cultural influences" enjoyed by their "fortunate brother" with "loving parents and good homes".²

By 1936 a new 'wood and iron convent (dwelling)' was constructed on the property for the Sisters of St Clare to care for the twenty boys housed at the property. Father J. G. Johnston was chaplain and Miss M. Stock was the matron. St Christopher's Lodge stood on 25 acres of ground where an article published in *The Telegraph* on 9 July 1936 stated "the boys [were] able to do a little farming" with the first boy leaving "some time ago" to go to St Lucia and continue his work as a farmer. At this time Father Bates was attempting to get funding that would enable those boys who were able, to go on to university.³ In 1937 the Franciscans acquired the adjacent portion 52 enlarging their landholding to 39 acres. The farm work at St Christopher's continued with the boys exhibiting their produce at the Brookfield Show.

In 1955 Father Bates died and St Christopher's Lodge with its training farm closed in the late 1950s as ideas about the correct care for disadvantaged people changed. Eighteen acres of the land was sold to the Presbyterian Church to establish what has become the neighbouring Blue Care Aged Care Facility and Iona Nursing Centre. From 1959 to 1961 St Christopher's and St Clare's buildings were used as a base for the 'Comrades of St George' – a church mission group for 15-25 year olds.

In 1965 title to the property was transferred to the Corporation of the Synod of the Church of England Diocese. Archbishop Philip Nigel Strong invited Franciscan Friars from England to the property who were later joined by brothers from Papua New Guinea and Wales. Due to the state of the Brookfield buildings, the Friars were temporarily accommodated at St Clare's House of Rest at Taringa until 1966, when the Taringa house burnt down. The Friars then restored the buildings on the Brookfield site, also raising and enclosing St Clare's Cottage to provide extra rooms underneath for novices. From 1966 to 1987 the Friary was operated by the Anglican Society of St Francis, operating as a self-sufficient farm and manufacturing hand-made pottery as well as working with the community offering practical help, rehabilitation and retreat. In 1971 architects Merrin and Cranston designed a chapel which was built on the property by Henry Clark & Sons. The Friary attracted 'hippie-types' in the 1970s with massive open air services accompanied by guitars and annual 'Friary Fayres' where farm produce, preserves and pottery were sold. The 'Friary Pottery' brand was sold in David Jones stores and presented to the Queen and visiting athletes and VIPs at the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games. In 1988 Expo volunteers for the Pavilion of Promise were housed at the property.

From 1991 Jack Thurgood from St David's Parish in Chelmer organised volunteers to restore the house and grounds. Local artist and Anglican Priest, the Reverend David Binns, decorated the house and chapel and

established the Brookfield Centre for Christian Spirituality. During this period, voluntary workers planted trees and constructed pathways for contemplation. A gift and coffee shop operated onsite from 1995 – 2004. A new house was built to the northeast the old home for Binns and his family in 1995. This house is not of heritage significance.

In 1998 the lower paddocks to the north were developed and sold as 'Friary Fields' - a private residential housing estate. The centre continued as a place of worship and retreat into the 21st Century, as well as a venue for community, exercise and music groups.

Description

The Old Friary complex comprises three buildings – the Main House, St Clare's Cottage, and the Friary Chapel – that stand in an expansive manicured landscape of lawns and mature trees. The complex is at the crest of a gentle hill and is accessed via a long tree-lined driveway off Brookfield Road, Kenmore Hills. The driveway ends at the rear of the main house.

The Main House

The Main House has a core (a section of Gailey's Glen Olive, built in 1890-91) wrapped in a verandah and roof (built in 1924 for the Watts family home). It is a substantial low-set, timber-framed structure that faces southeast, away from the main entrance to the site, and looks across a lawn dotted with mature trees. From the exterior, the house is generally in an interwar bungalow style with a wide, encircling timber-framed verandah (that includes elements salvaged from Glen Olive) and a broad, low hipped roof with dormer gables. The front is generally symmetrical, although this has been compromised by later enclosing of the verandah, which has also occurred for the full length of the sides and rear. The verandah enclosures are not of cultural heritage significance but could include significant fabric from 1890-91 and 1924.

Front entry onto the verandah is via a projecting, gabled porch, reached by a short rendered masonry stair. The area of verandah at the front door remains unenclosed and reveals unusual and extravagant architectural detail from Glen Olive. To either side of central twin front doors with bolection moulding and fanlights are hexagonal bay windows. The windows, doors, and fanlights are glazed with multiple panes of coloured, patterned, and textured glass – the bay on the southwest has pink glass and the bay on the northeast has blue. The verandah wall is clad with sharp, narrow chamferboards.

The interior has a traditional layout with a central hall from front to back providing access to rooms either side. The front rooms and hall foyer reveal the earlier origin of the core as they are in a highly-decorative and imaginative Victorian style. The rooms are lofty and feature original timber joinery and retain some original windows sheltered externally by decorative timber hoods. Although there are some alterations, the core of the house retains considerable original fabric and configuration.

St Clare's Cottage

St Clare's Cottage (1936) is a characteristic interwar porch and gable timber-framed and clad house that is situated to the southwest of the Main House. The house is aligned with and faces the same way as the Main House and retains original external form and detailing. It has been raised and enclosed under for further accommodation, which is not of cultural heritage significance.

The Friary Chapel

The Friary Chapel (1971) is a concrete block structure with an octagonal plan form and roof that stands in the front lawn facing northwest, near to both houses. The floor is a concrete slab, suspended at the southeast. A flat-roofed patio encircles the chapel, enclosed in parts to form vestries. Marking the entrance to the church is a modest spire with bell and a large timber cross and access into the church is via glazed sliding doors. The interior is a tall octagonal space with a battened ceiling and a central oculus leadlight window depicting a dove. The sanctuary is at the southeast side, defined by a single step platform with altar at the eastern end. The chapel is very intact, retaining original lights, pews and kneelers, cork tile floor finish, altar, timber candle stands, and other liturgical objects. Importantly, the chapel includes homespun art of high-quality made on the premises by the friars, Reverend David Binns and other local artists, including stencilling, canvas paintings, and ceramic sculptures. Of a particularly fine quality is a large raw timber Corpus Christi mounted externally on the front wall of the chapel. The art combined with the humble architectural scale and materials of the chapel evoke a distinctly down-to-earth, creative, and productive place of religious devotion.

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 a large nineteenth century house relocated to Brookfield Road in the very early days of its development as a rural residential suburb. The house is reminiscent of large homes redeveloped to provide care for the aged and disadvantaged across the city.

Historical

CRITERION A

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

as an interwar house built in 1936 on the Church of England property as a convent and an integral part of its development as a boys' home.

Scientific

CRITERION C

The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the city's or local area's history

as the only known surviving remnant of Richard Gailey's own house 'Glen Olive', built at the pinnacle of his career.

Representative

CRITERION D

The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class or classes of cultural places

as a good example of a small-scale architect-designed chapel in the style of the innovative, non-traditional churches of the 1960s and 70s.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a large nineteenth century house on a hilltop surrounded by trees and vegetation, with the attractive setting and views over the surrounding area having aesthetic values.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a chapel built and designed for the Anglican Franciscan friars as the focal point of their community.

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 large nineteenth century house used to accommodate Church of England religious orders and their welfare recipients, and as a base for their community and mission work, which continues.

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 modest house built to accommodate the matron and the Daughters of St Clare who provided care for the disadvantaged boys living at St Christopher's Lodge.

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 chapel built in memory of Father Robert Bartlett Bates who was instrumental in establishing and developing the Church of England welfare projects on this site from 1932 until his death in 1955. He left a substantial legacy of property and welfare.

References

2. 'New Boys Homes for Brisbane' The Telegraph 3 March 1934, p2. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article182637455>
3. 'Franciscan's Work of Charity makes Rapid Advances' The Telegraph 9 July 1936,p.23.<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1823144440>
5. Brisbane City Council Building Cards
6. Digitised newspapers and other records. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
8. Queensland Certificates of Title
9. Queensland Post Office Directories
10. St Lucia History Society Group

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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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