

Heritage Citation



St John's Church

Key details

Addresses	At 688 Nudgee Road, Northgate, Queensland 4013
Type of place	Church, Monument / memorial
Period	Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	Ecclesiastical
Lot plan	L1_RP48166
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 July 2005 Date of Citation — February 2011
Construction	Roof: Tile; Walls: Face brick
People/associations	Corbett and Ryan (Architect)
Criterion for listing	(B) Rarity; (H) Historical association

St John's Church was built in 1962, eleven years after it was proposed for construction with the adjacent St John's Convent School. This church is the only non-military place of worship built specifically as a Royal Australian Navy War Memorial. The church contains a Roll of Honour of the sailors who enlisted in Brisbane during the Second World War and later died during that conflict.

History

The site of this church was originally part of one acre, two roods and 11 perches of freehold land sold to John Fraser on 19 December 1863. The land was designated Portion 153 in the parish of Toombul. William John Munce purchased Portion 153 on 27 January 1874. He transferred it to Frederick Ahles on 9 November that same year. Ahles, an engine fitter, resided at Boyd Street, Nundah.

Mary Jane Edgar, the wife of Henry Edgar, bought Portion 153 on 6 December 1912. The Edgar family subdivided the land and retained subdivision 1 of Portion 153. On this block, they built the family home around 1915. The farmhouse and land were sold to Ada Caroline Cambage, the wife of Walter Cambage on 28 May 1918.

The opening of the Holland and Mackenzie factory on Toombul Road prior to First World War and the construction further along Northgate Road of the Northgate Rail Workshops in 1914 attracted more residents. This part of Northgate, known as Northgate East, saw its first housing development ('Station Estate') in 1918. 'Hala Estate', bounded by Toombul and Melton Roads plus Allworth and Edgar Streets, was subdivided for sale on 11 October 1924. A dedicated but unformed road, Best Street, ran through the Estate's centre, joining Edgar Street to Melton Road. Melton Road was known as North Coast Road at this time. The six allotments on the corner of Toombul Road and Melton Road were sold. Another 12 houses were erected on the blocks at the corner of Melton Road and Allworth Street.

On 22 August 1929, the former Edgar farm was sold to the Catholic Church. However, such was the population growth in the area that the Catholic Church chose to utilise the Edgar farmhouse as a temporary church, presbytery and parish meeting centre to meet community needs. The church was called St John's Church.

After the Second World War, with the housing boom, the vacant blocks in Northgate began filling with new homes and residents. As well, employment opportunities improved. In 1946, a Queensland fruit grower co-operative began constructing the Golden Circle cannery on ex-US Army land on Earnshaw Road, Northgate. Golden Circle soon became the largest single employer in the area. The former US Navy warehouses along Toombul Road were leased to a variety of businesses including GMH Holden and Athol Hedges car body makers. In 1952, the US company Kraft converted one of these warehouses into a processed cheese factory, while Wunderlich opened a tile factory on Crockford Street.

Such as the area's post-war population growth that in 1951, the Catholic Church applied to Brisbane City Council to build a school and a new church building. However, only the school would be built. Catholic Archbishop James Duhig laid the foundation stone for Northgate's first school - St John's Convent School, located centrally at the corner of Nudgee and Fraser Roads, on 8 April 1951. The school was designed by architect Frank Leo Cullen, the nephew of Archbishop Duhig and enrolled its first students in 1952. Eventually, due to declining enrolments, St John's Convent School closed at the end of the 1995 school year. A time capsule was laid on 10 November 1995 by the last students at the school close to the small Grotto of the Virgin Mary that is located beside the church.

While St John's Convent School attracted more Catholic families to the area, the inadequate worship facilities provided by the old Edgar farmhouse became increasingly evident. This presented a poor image to the Catholic pupils and their parents. Nonetheless, this unsatisfactory situation remained for the following 10 years. By the beginning of the 1960s, a campaign to obtain a proper church building was led by the Northgate Parish priest Reverend Father V. Rowan. Final approval for the construction of the new church was gained from Brisbane City Council on 8 February 1962.

The architectural practice of Corbett and Ryan designed a modern brick, glass and tile church that was constructed beside St John's school. The foundation stone was laid and blessed by Archbishop Duhig on 13 May 1962, and the new St John's Church was completed in August 1962. It cost £34,000 to build. The former Edgar farmhouse remained as the Presbytery.

The decision to dedicate the building as a Royal Australian Navy War Memorial Church made the new St John's Church unique. It was the first Australian church of any denomination that was built to honour the war dead of the Royal Australian Navy. King George V proclaimed the Royal Australian Navy's creation on 10 July 1911. By 1962, the Royal Australian Navy had fought in the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Malayan Emergency. On 2 August 1962, the Queensland branch of the Naval Association presented Father Rowan with a Roll of Honour plaque that listed 171 names of the Royal Australian Navy personnel who had enlisted in Brisbane and subsequently died during the Second World War. The Roll of Honour is mounted on the outside wall at the base of the bell tower. A cast-iron Royal Australian Navy emblem shield and a brass dedication plaque are also placed at the (main) Nudgee Road entrance to the church.

On Sunday, 4 August 1962, St John's Church was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop Patrick Mary O'Donnell. O'Donnell was Duhig's Coadjutor and the last Irish-born bishop to be appointed to high office in the Australian Catholic Church. In attendance at this dedication ceremony was the Commonwealth Minister of the Navy John Gorton, the Flag Officer-in-Charge of the Royal Australian Navy's East Australian Area Rear Admiral G.G.O. Gatacre and the Naval Officer-in-Charge for Queensland Commander J. Ferguson.

St John's Church remains Australia's first and only civilian Royal Australian Navy War Memorial Church. The only other similar structure is the Naval Memorial Chapel of St George the Martyr at the HMAS Watson naval base on the cliffs situated above South Heath, Sydney. It is a small military chapel, whereas the St John's building is a large civilian church.

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:

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as the first civilian church purpose built as a Royal Australian Navy War Memorial Church.

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

containing a Roll of Honour listing the names of those RAN members who enlisted in Brisbane and later died in World War Two.

References

1. Brisbane City Council, 1946, 2001, 2005 & 2009 aerial photographs
 2. Brisbane City Council, Heritage Unit suburban history file - Northgate
 3. Brisbane City Council, post-1945 building application cards
 4. Brisbane City Council Properties on the Web
 5. Department of Natural Resources, Queensland Certificate of Title records
 6. Queensland Electoral Rolls, The Electoral District of Nundah, 1897 & 1900 editions
 7. *Queensland Post Office Directories*, 1868-1949 editions
 8. *The Courier Mail*, 3 August 1962
 9. Watson, Donald & Judith McKay, *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940*, UQ Library, 1984
 10. <http://www.fethard.com/people/bishop.html>
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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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