

## Heritage Citation



### Brisbane Spiritual Church

#### Key details

<b>Addresses</b>	At 228 Boundary Street, Spring Hill, Queensland 4000
<b>Type of place</b>	Church
<b>Period</b>	Interwar 1919-1939
<b>Style</b>	Free Gothic
<b>Lot plan</b>	L9_RP814964
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — May 2010
<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Face brick
<b>People/associations</b>	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Association)
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(G) Social; (H) Historical association

This building has served as the centre for religious and community services for the Brisbane Spiritual Church, the first officially-recognised Spiritualist Church in Australia, since its construction for the Church in 1929. It also has a close association with renowned author and leading spiritualist, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who laid the church's foundation stone in January 1921. Renovations and extensions undertaken in the 1990s have served to preserve and enhance the original building.

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## History (previous revision)

A number of spiritualist movements were active in Brisbane in the late 19th Century. The Brisbane Spiritual Church was the first of these to receive official recognition with the signing of Letters Patent by George V in 1913. Led by its first President Theodore Reinhold (Rheinholdt), the Church at first held meetings in rented rooms, in Stanley St. South Brisbane, the Presbyterian Church building in Wickham Tce. and Sparkes Building in Wickham St. As its membership continued to expand, the church had moved its weekly meetings by the early 1920s to the spacious Scott's Hall at the corner of Brunswick and Leichhardt Sts.

The Spiritual Church purchased two allotments on Boundary St. which were part of the original purchase of Spring Hill land by William Anthony Brown in 1856. He paid seventy-nine pounds, twelve shillings and five pence sterling for one acre, two roods and thirty-one perches comprising suburban portion 194. Closer settlement of the Spring Hill area began to intensify in the 1870s and, as with other land Brown had purchased in the 1850s, Portion 194 was subdivided into small allotments.

Subdivision 9 of portion 194 comprising 13 6/10ths perches was sold in 1878 to John Carmody, to Charles McCaffery in 1879 and to William Black in 1904. The Spiritual Church purchased it in 1918, taking out a mortgage with Black for three hundred pounds. This allotment was partly affected by the realignment of Mein St. in September 1906.

Subdivision 8 of portion 194 comprising 11 3/10ths perches passed through several owners following its purchase by James Dunlop in 1878 until purchased by William Black in 1899. A period acting as trustee for the land with Grace Douglas ended with her death in June 1918. Black sold it in 1920 to the Spiritual Church which registered a mortgage of one hundred pounds with the Brisbane Permanent Building Society. Releases being signed for both mortgages in 1929, a new mortgage over both properties was taken out with the Queensland National Bank in 1929. Subdivision 8 was converted to Lot 8 and Subdivision 9 was converted to Lot 9 in 1986.

Brisbane was a brief stop on the five-month lecture tour of Australia by English author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to promote the spiritualist movement. On Sunday 9 January 1921, he laid the foundation stone for "the first Spiritual Church in Australia" at the Boundary St. property. According to a report in *The Mercury* (Hobart), he

"warned members of the church against uncharitableness towards other religions, remarking that there were many ladders to heaven." Before departing, it was also reported, Conan Doyle and his wife donated fifty pounds towards the new church's estimated cost of ten thousand pounds.

The Spiritual Church continued to meet in Scott's Hall. On 10 August 1929, G.B. Elkin, who had become president on the death of Reinhold in 1928, laid the foundation stone of the Spiritual Church Hall on the allotment facing Mein St. On that occasion, he advised that the Hall would serve until sufficient funds were available for the construction of a church on the adjoining allotment. The economic depression of the 1930s, followed by the war years and post-war reconstruction, put paid to this plan. Over the decades, the Church continued to offer spiritual and community services and its membership remained substantial.

In 1990, the decision to renew and expand existing facilities was approved. Between 1990 and 1993, without incurring any financial difficulties, it undertook a major upgrade of the existing building “to better facilitate the growing congregations and enable the church to hold its own seminars and extend its activities.” The work improved access to the building and included a new library, toilets and kitchen, and a healing room and office.

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## Description (previous revision)

A two-storey structure constructed in brick with an iron roof. Access to entrance vestibule on street elevation is by two staircases, one with a shade canopy and safety rails. Iron shade hoods installed above all windows. The original foundation stone plaque sits in the front wall of the vestibule. There are two matching circular stained glass windows above the front entrance and on back wall, and two rectangular stained glass windows at the back wall.

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## 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:

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### 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 long-established centre for the spiritualist movement in Brisbane, the first officially recognised Spiritual Church in Australia and the only registered spiritual Church in Queensland.

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### 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

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, renowned author and a leader of the international spiritualist movement, laid the church's foundation stone.

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## References

1. Brisbane City Council Property Details 29.3.2004
2. Cadastral Map 23.04.2002
3. Brisbane City Council Site History 20.06.2002
4. BCC building cards
5. Titles History – Titles, Certificates of Title, Transfers, Bills of Mortgage
6. Photographs: Brisbane City Council Heritage Unit, Sept. 2001; July 2010
7. "Spiritual Church for Brisbane", *The Mercury (Hobart)* 18.1.1921, p.4
8. "Conan Doyle Farewell Address: Review of Tour" *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31.1.1921, p.9
9. "Spiritual Church: Welcome to Mr Horace Leaf", BC 24.5.1922,p.8
10. "Spiritual Church. Secures Its Own Hall", *Brisbane Courier* (BC) 12.8.1929, p.3
11. "Brisbane Spiritual Church," *Spiritualist News* n.d. p.11
12. John Milne, *The Origins and History of the Valley Spiritualist Church 1943 – 1985*, Brisbane: Spiritualist Church, 1986

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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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