

Heritage Citation



Ross Roy (former)

Key details

Also known as	Indoocombe
Addresses	At 60 Harts Road, Indooroopilly, Queensland 4068
Type of place	Chapel, School, Mansion, House
Period	Federation 1890-1914, Late 20th Century 1960-1999
Style	Queen Anne
Lot plan	L2_RP61078; L1_RP23391; L1_RP61078
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 30 November 2012 Date of Citation — January 2012
People/associations	Claude William Chambers - residence (Architect); Karl Langer - chapel (Architect); United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Association)

Criterion for listing

(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (D) Representative; (E) Aesthetic; (F) Technical; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

'Ross Roy' was constructed in 1897 to a design by Claude W. Chambers, as a residence for tea merchant Daniel Collings and family. Passed to the Munros around 1910, it was given its current name and used as the family residence as well as the setting for several charitable functions. The house, with six acres of land, was sold to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1945 and repurposed as a secondary Lutheran school. The Langer chapel, designed by important and influential architect Karl Langer, was built for the school in 1967-8. Both buildings have continued to be used by the St Peter's Lutheran College, which has grown to become the largest co-educational Lutheran school in Australia.

History

The Indooroopilly district was surveyed and offered for sale in the late 1850s and its first residence, 'Witton Manor', was constructed in 1861. However the area was too far from the central business district to induce large numbers of settlers, and it remained sparsely populated. Stronger growth occurred after the 1870s, following the construction of a hotel, post office (1874) and railway line (1875). By 1890 the area had a separate local government and boasted a primary school and church. Its appeal was enhanced with the appearance of stately architecturally-designed houses, including 'Greylands' (1876) [600230], 'Tighnabruaich' (c.1889) [600229] and 'Keating House' (c.1890s) [602057].

The land on which 'Ross Roy' and the Langer Chapel are located was originally part of a 45-acre allotment granted to Thomas Lodge Murray-Prior (later Postmaster-General) in 1859. Just over 35 acres of Murray-Prior's land was purchased by Edward Long in the 1870s, much of which was then offered for sale as part of the 'Langdale Estate'. In June 1896 Amy Jane Collings, wife of tea merchant Daniel Collings, purchased one of the estate's villa sites, an area of six acres and one perch. By the time Mrs Collings made her purchase, Indooroopilly was a well-established district and was becoming increasingly popular for middle-class residents. Collings himself, principal of Collings and Co. India and China tea merchants, was an example of the professionals and businessmen who took up residence in the area. He had moved to Brisbane from Sydney in 1887 with Amy, and set up business immediately. The couple resided in Edward Street, and Collins ran his successful business from an Elizabeth Street address.

Shortly after buying the Indooroopilly land the Collings commissioned architect Claude William Chambers to design a villa on the site at Harts Rd. Architect Claude William Chambers was born in Melbourne and began his architectural career in that city. He moved to Sydney in the early 1880s, then to Brisbane with the architectural firm of Blackman and Parkes. Chambers worked in Brisbane with prominent local architect F.D.G. Stanley, and later operated the Brisbane end of the Sydney firm McCredie Bros and Chambers. From 1893 Chambers ran his own company, building it into one of Brisbane's largest architectural practices. He was a foundation member of the Queensland Institute of Architects, and of the Federal Council of the Australian Institute of Architects. Chambers formed a partnership with architect Lange Powell in 1911 before moving to Sydney in 1915.

Tenders for the brick villa were called in January 1897 and the Collings' house was probably completed later that year, with the property enclosed with a post and rail fence. 'Indoocombe', as the house was called, became a

noted property in the area. Brick was relatively unusual in the Queensland colony and the house was situated on a hill, making it easily visible. It was “built along the substantial lines of an English country gentleman’s home” and was regarded as a “truly splendid property” in 1906.

In September 1908 ‘Indoocombe’ was offered for auction. Described as being just a seven minute walk from the railway station, the house was surrounded by six acres of ornamental gardens.

The house is approached by carriage drive, and contains, on ground floor, hall, inlaid with oak parquetry, and lighted with Cathedral Glass Windows, and the following reception rooms: Dining Room, Drawing Room, Morning Room, Library, Servants Hall, Kitchen, Butler’s Pantry, Strong Room, Larder, Store Room, Box Room, Lavatory, H. and C. Laundry, etc. On the first floor, which is approached by two staircases, are seven lofty and spacious Bed and Dressing Rooms, two bathrooms, H. and C., Housemaid’s Closet, Linen Press. The sanitation is perfect, water being laid on: also rain water cisterns. The verandas around the house are exceptionally wide.

Daniel Collings moved to Woodbridge in Tasmania around 1910, taking the name ‘Indoocombe’ there. His Indooroopilly residence was acquired by William Ross Munro, a prominent western Queensland pastoralist, owner of ‘Boombah’ near St George and other stations. In about 1910 the Munros moved from the country to the Indooroopilly house on medical advice, Marie Jane Munro having a long-term illness sustained as a result of a bite from a death adder. Despite her illness, which eventually confined her to bed, Mrs Munro was heavily involved in community activities as president and then patroness of the Paddington branch of the Creche and Kindergarten movement, holding garden parties to benefit the organisation. She was also patroness of the Moreton Club, and involved with fundraising for Red Cross work during WWI. Several fundraisers were held in the 1910s and 1920s at her residence, renamed ‘Ross Roy’ after William and one of the Munro sons. Eminent guests included Dame Nellie Melba, godmother to one of the Munro grandchildren, who appeared at a ‘coin tea’ in 1922.

Marie Munro passed away in 1938 and after William Ross Munro’s death in 1944 the 23-roomed two-storeyed house ‘Ross Roy’ was sold by his sons to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia, Queensland District. The Church established a boarding school for Lutheran students on the site in 1945, and ‘Ross Roy’ was initially used as the main building for its 56 boarders. German Lutherans had been present in Brisbane since establishing a mission station at Nundah in 1838, although most Lutheran immigrants had settled in South Australia. Some Lutheran schools were set up in Queensland in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but most were overwhelmed by the advent of state-funded education and none had survived. This school, named St Peter’s Lutheran College, was the first in a new wave of Lutheran schools opened from the mid-twentieth century. It was also the first co-educational boarding school in the state.

The Langer Chapel was added to the school in 1968, designed by architect Dr Karl Langer as the centrepiece of the grounds. Designed in Modernist style, it also featured a short, tree-lined promenade, bell tower and reflecting pool. Langer, who had emigrated from Germany to Australia in 1939, was one of Queensland’s eminent architects, combining a modernist style with considerations for the local sub-tropical conditions. He served as president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1952, was founder and chairman of the Queensland Association of Landscape Architects from 1966-68 and was a member of the National Trust of Queensland from 1963-69. Langer had a strong connection with the Queensland Lutheran community, having designed St John’s Lutheran College in Bundaberg (1960) and St John’s Lutheran Church in Ipswich (1961). In addition he had completed a number of buildings for the College, including a chaplain’s residence (1954), dormitory block (1954-5), dining hall block (1966) and concrete footbridge (1966-7). He also had connections to the area, as his own self-designed residence was situated in nearby St Lucia (Langer House [600317]).

The chapel’s foundation stone was laid on 17 September 1967 and its construction was undertaken by W.W.

Groom at a cost of \$123,938. It was dedicated and opened on 14 June 1968. The chapel became Langer's favourite design, embodying lessons he had learned from classical Greece. Langer described the symbolism within the design of the church as follows:

The whole church is fan shaped, concentrating on the Altar; even the arrangement of the pews is leading up to the Altar. The lights are hidden from the Nave to eliminate any distraction from the Altar. The wall behind the Altar and the ceiling, forming one curve, are absolutely plain and have no element to arrest attention. The dominant feature is the Cross – a symbol of resurrection. The Cross is floating in a strong light symbolising the rising sun. The solidity of the heavy stone Altar contrasts strongly with the Cross bringing out the rising Cross in the sunlight all the more. The Alpha Omega, the five crosses, the three pieces of the Altar construction, as well as the steps, need no further explanation. The three fins of the tower which enclose the Meditation Chapel symbolising the Holy Trinity. This theme is repeated in the meditation Chapel with three windows. The usage of symbols is restrained to the utmost, but each symbol has been brought out to the fullest.

As of 2012 St Peter's was the largest co-educational Lutheran boarding school in Australia and both 'Ross Roy' and the Langer Chapel continue to be used by the College.

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 'Ross Roy' is the centerpiece of a grand country estate established by a successful merchant in the late nineteenth century when fine houses surrounded by extensive grounds were prevalent in Indooroopilly. The Langer Chapel is important as part of the growth of St Peter's Lutheran College, now the largest coeducational Lutheran school in Australia, and as a sign of the continuing influence of the Lutheran church in Brisbane.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage

as 'Ross Roy' is a grand architect-designed mansion of the nineteenth century.

Representative

CRITERION D

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

as a post-WWII chapel in Queensland, designed in the Modernist style but with distinctive and unique design elements (the Langer Chapel).

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as 'Ross Roy' is a finely detailed example of a substantial late Victorian villa residence and the Langer Chapel combines Lutheran symbolism with its mid-century Modernist styling.

Technical

CRITERION F

The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technological achievement at a particular period

as the Chapel integrates strong ecclesiastical symbolism into the Modernist architectural idiom in a manner that Langer himself acknowledged as the pinnacle of his architectural work. The Chapel is considered to demonstrate a high degree of creative achievement amongst ecclesiastical buildings of that era.

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 the initial residence and the central place of worship of St Peter's Lutheran boarding school established in 1945.

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 'Ross Roy' is a fine residence designed by prominent late nineteenth and early twentieth century architect Claude William Chambers. The Langer Chapel has a special association with influential Modernist architect Dr Karl Langer

References

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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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