

## Heritage Citation



**St Benedict's Catholic Church**

### Key details

<b>Also known as</b>	Father Breen Memorial Church
<b>Addresses</b>	At 81 Mowbray Terrace, East Brisbane, Queensland 4169
<b>Type of place</b>	Church, Monument / memorial
<b>Period</b>	World War I 1914-1918
<b>Style</b>	Free Classical
<b>Lot plan</b>	L3_RP11455; L2_RP11455; L4_RP11455
<b>Key dates</b>	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — May 2003

<b>Construction</b>	Roof: Terracotta tile; Walls: Face brick
<b>People/associations</b>	Archbishop Duhig (Association); George Henry Male Addison (Architect); Reverend James Benedict Breen (Association)
<b>Criterion for listing</b>	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

Opened in 1917, St Benedict's was one of the first churches associated with Duhig's intensive building campaign to provide places of worship for Brisbane's Catholic community. The church, which was designed by architect G.H.M. Addison in the Interwar Free Classical style, also serves as a memorial to Reverend James Benedict Breen, who served as parish priest for many years.

## History

Archbishop Duhig opened St Benedict's Catholic Church, also known as the Father Breen Memorial Church, on 12 August 1917. It was the second in a series of Catholic churches designed by G.H.M. Addison. Other churches designed by Addison were St Columba's, Wilston (1915), Sacred Heart Church, Rosalie (1918), and the Church of the Little Flower at Kedron (1923 - now demolished). The church was named to honour St Benedict, but was also a memorial to Father James Benedict Breen who served as parish priest at Kangaroo Point for many years.

St Benedict's is situated on the outskirts of what was formerly Mowbraytown Estate. Originally owned by the Reverend Thomas Mowbray, a Presbyterian minister who emigrated to Moreton Bay in 1847, this estate was subdivided into unusually small allotments of 14 perches in the 1880s, after the death of Mowbray's wife, Williamina. While the economic depression and devastating floods of the 1890s caused serious setbacks to the growth of the area, development began once more in the early twentieth century with the opening of more residential estates, spurred by the extension of the electric tramway in 1903. Until 1917, the Catholic community in the area was part of the parish of St Joseph's at Kangaroo Point and usually attended church there.

The site of St Benedict's Church was selected and purchased by Archbishop Duhig from Mr T. Gillam for £575. The land was presented to the newly created parish as a gift in memory of "their beloved priest", Father Breen, who died in 1916 after serving as parish priest at St Joseph's from 1880 to 1915. The contract for the construction of the church was awarded to J.G. Hobbs for £2,278. The total cost of the church including the sanctuary, seating, fences and architectural fees was almost £3,060. Over £1,100 was collected from the parish towards the cost of the church, with another £1,000 expected to be raised from a church fete.

Duhig laid the foundation stone of St Benedict's on 18 March 1917. The church was built at the beginning of a period of intensive building by Duhig in his drive to provide places of worship for Brisbane's growing Catholic population. The archbishop also purchased a house to the rear of the site to be used as a school when the need arose. When Duhig returned to open and bless the church in August, he noted that "this side of Brisbane of late years had become very populous and the walk from where they were to St Joseph's on an early Sunday morning, when no trams were running, was very trying indeed".

Several additions have been made to the parish of St Benedict's in the decades since the construction of the church. A primary school, run by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan was opened by the Apostolic Delegate, Dr Cattaneo, on 29 January 1929. A convent and presbytery had also been built by this date. The need for more land was eased by the bequest of Mr W. Naughton who left his entire estate to the church. As Duhig noted when he blessed additions to the school in 1939, "other parishes had property to give away but in East Brisbane the district had been very settled before their arrival".

The church was painted and altered in 1974, when a "colonnade" was added to the eastern side of the church. Other changes included rewiring, a new public address system and a new glazed screen. In 1980, due to the scarcity of priests and the need to staff the new parishes of Brisbane's developing suburbs, the parish of St Benedict was reamalgamated with St Joseph's Parish at Kangaroo Point.

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## Description

This Inter-War Free Classical style church faces north and is located on the northwest corner of the site. Access is provided on the eastern side of the site to a presbytery located on church property to the rear of this church site.

The building is rectangular in plan form with a timber framed extension to the southern end added in recent years. An unsympathetic skillion roofed covered walkway attached to the eastern side at a later stage has now been enclosed.

Rising from a rendered brick plinth, the building is constructed in face brickwork laid in Flemish Bond and incorporating flat buttresses on the eastern and western sides. The timber framed extension at the southern end is sheeted with chamferboard.

The roof is sheeted with terra cotta tiles which are continued over the southern extension. The eaves overhang is supported on timber eaves brackets attached to the buttresses. The eaves are lined with timber boarding spaced slightly apart to allow ventilation to the roof space.

Timber framed casement windows with fixed fanlights shaped to the semicircular arch are located between side wall parapets. Fanlights are framed with a rendered archivolt moulding. A rendered band of brickwork below the window forms a continuous sill line between buttresses. This sill band is weathered under window frames. The first window bay on each side is slightly modified by the deletion of arched fanlight and replacement of a flat head. Several courses above this head a set of rectangular fanlights is located.

Three stained glass lancet windows in the southern extension provide lighting to that end of the building.

Entrance doorways to the front and sides are framed vertical joint, hung in pairs.

The unsympathetic eastern side addition which forms a side expansion to the nave is supported on brick piers and lined with chamferboard to sill level and aluminium framed sliding glass windows above. The window heads are lined with fibre cement board sheeting. The roof is sheeted with metal decking.

The front elevation incorporates a parapeted gable flanked on either side by stepped buttresses which project beyond the roof line and parapet and which are terminated with rendered triangulated form cappings. The apex of the parapeted gable contains an aedicule (ornamental architectural frame) supported on projecting cornice haunches. A stained glass rose window, surrounded by three circular bands of brickwork dominates the centre of the front elevation and is flanked on either side by entrance buttresses which form a springing point for a projecting archivolt moulding. A chamfered cornice links the entrance buttresses with the corner stepped buttresses.

The small recessed entrance porch has been protected by the addition of a cantilevered entrance canopy. This canopy, which is out of character with the remainder of the elevation, is supported on free standing R.H.S. (steel) columns and is lined and faced with fibre cement sheeting and roofed with a flat metal decking.

Similar metal decking, supported on timber brackets, has been installed to provide awning protection to timber framed windows located between front buttresses. These awnings are out of character with the remainder of the building.

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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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#### Historical

##### CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history for the evidence it provides about the development of the East Brisbane area in the early twentieth century.

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#### Aesthetic

##### CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a fine example of an early twentieth century brick church designed by prominent Brisbane architect G.H.M. Addison in the Interwar Free Classical style.

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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 the site of continuous Catholic worship from 1917 and the evidence it provides of the importance of religious observance and education for successive generations of Catholics in the area.

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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

for its association with Archbishop Duhig, whose influence resulted in the great increase in Catholic Churches in Brisbane, as a memorial to the late devoted priest of the diocese, Rev James Benedict Breen, and as an example of the work of prominent Brisbane architect G.H.M. Addison.

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## References

1. *Age*, (Brisbane), 18 August 1917
2. *Brisbane Courier*, 13 August 1917 & 24 January 1931
3. *Catholic Leader*, 16 February 1939, 24 November 1974 & 13 April 1980
4. East Brisbane Community Centre and Mowbraytown Residents' Group, nd., Mowbraytown
5. Ferrier, P. 1986, *The Golden Period of Catholic Progress: Archdiocese of Brisbane 1912-1927*, B.Arch. thesis, University of Queensland
6. O'Leary, Rev J. 1919, *Catholic Progress: Archdiocese of Brisbane 1912-1919*, J. O'Leary, St James' Presbytery, Coorparoo
7. St Benedict's Parish File, Catholic Archives
8. Steer, G.R. 1944, "Brisbane tramways: their history and development", *RHSJ*, vol.3, no.3. (May 1944)

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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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