

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

St Joseph's Church Complex, 41-55 Stanhope Street, Malvern (HO102)



Figures 1-4. (R-L, top to bottom) St Joseph's Church, Presbytery, Parish Hall and School (GJM Heritage, July 2020).

DATE: June 2021

Place type: Church complex	Architects: George McMullen (parish church/original church); Augustus A Fritsch (presbytery & church); Bart Moriarty (1917 school building); Robert Harper (1941 school building)
Construction Date: 1889-1941	Builder: Clements Langford (presbytery); Swanson Bros (1908 church); Robert Harper (1941 school building)

Historical Context Summary

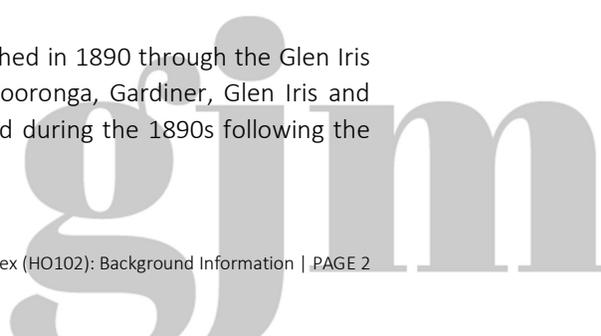
The City of Stonnington stands on the Traditional Lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the East Kulin Nations. Archaeologists believe that Aboriginal People have been in Victoria for more than 30,000 years. Throughout this long history their relationship with the landscape (where and how they live) has changed according to factors such as climate change, resource availability, and cultural change (Context 2006:10).

The first European settler in the Malvern district was John Gardiner in 1835, a pastoralist from New South Wales who was one of the first overlanders to Port Phillip. He pastured his stock near the junction of Gardiner’s Creek and the Yarra River and is the namesake of Gardiner’s Creek, Gardiner’s Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and both the locality and the Shire of Gardiner (before they were re-named Malvern). The first recorded use of the name Malvern was in January 1854, when barrister Charles B. G. Skinner named his hotel on the corner of Malvern and Glenferrie roads the ‘Malvern Hill’ after a district in England. The name for the Shire of Malvern was derived from Malvern Hill Estate, a private subdivision in the area dating to 1856 (City of Stonnington [CoS]; Context 2006:34).

The first land sales in the area were held in 1854 and most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale (Context 2006:41; 2009:4). Gardiner’s Road District was proclaimed in 1856 before Gardiner Shire was formed in 1871, which was renamed Malvern Shire in 1878 (CoS). The municipal boundary comprised the current localities of Malvern (previously Gardiner), Malvern East, Glen Iris (south of Gardiners Creek), Kooyong, Armadale (east of Kooyong Road), Toorak (east of Kooyong Road) and Chadstone (west of Warrigal Road). Early directories listed Malvern and Malvern East as the one locality, until 1910.

The former Malvern Shire saw slow population growth to 1881, by which time it totalled just under 2,000 people (Victorian Places). In 1879, the Oakleigh Railway Line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the start of the land boom, which resulted in considerable urban growth. In the 1880s the district comprised substantial residences on large allotments, as well as pastoral and agricultural holdings (including market gardens and orchards) and commercial development (Context 2006:41, 65-6). During the 1880s boom period, the municipality saw a dramatic increase in population, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891, and steadily increasing to 10,000 by 1901 (Victorian Places). In the 1890s a number of timber houses were built in Malvern as an economy measure, but some residents complained that wooden houses would degenerate into slums. Concern about this development led to a slum abolition movement and subsequently, c1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas, where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the Council had also fixed a minimum area for individual housing allotments at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Context 2006:128).

The railway line along the northern extent of the municipality was established in 1890 through the Glen Iris Valley from Burnley. Stations were established at Heyington, Kooyong, Tooronga, Gardiner, Glen Iris and Darling, however, expected residential development in their vicinity stalled during the 1890s following the



economic collapse (Context 2006:66). The 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) described Malvern as ‘an elevated residential suburb’, served by a line of omnibuses from Prahran, with many leading merchants and professional men living in the area in pleasantly situated ‘dwellings of a superior class’. The entry noted that a number of notable mansions had been erected by this date, and that the market gardens and orchards were ‘steadily being reduced, and cut up into building allotments, on which [were] being erected many handsome villas and business establishments’ (Victorian Places). The municipality saw rapid development and urbanisation from 1900 and it was declared a Borough and then a Town in 1901. In 1911 the municipality was declared a City, with a residential population of 16,000 (Context 2006:86; Victorian Places).

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was established in 1908, with electric tramlines opening along High Street in 1910-14, Glenferrie Road in 1910-13, to the south along Wattletree Road in 1910-12, and Malvern Road in 1915. The arrival of the tramlines further drove the development of commercial centres in the immediate vicinity and residential development beyond. New train stations were built at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak between 1908 and 1918, and at Malvern East in 1929 (Context 2006:70-2, 113; Victorian Places).

Residential development during the early twentieth century generally occurred on newly subdivided estates or on nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). In 1912 it was reported that 800 houses a year were being built in the (by then) City of Malvern, which boasted ‘a progress unprecedented by any other suburb’ (Context 2009:128). In the decade between 1911 and 1921 the population in the City of Malvern doubled, from 16,000 to 32,000 residents, and then increased steadily to 43,000 by 1933 (Victorian Places). This population growth saw development spread to the Glen Iris Valley and the outer reaches of the City, in Malvern East. The housing stock in this eastern part of the municipality was more characteristically uniform and unadorned in comparison to housing in Malvern. Kooyong’s development was substantially completed by the end of the 1920s (Context 2006:128, 131).

By 1946 the Australian Blue Book (as cited in Victorian Places) stated that Malvern was one of the ‘leading residential suburbs of the Metropolis’. It comprised the substantial homes of many of Melbourne’s leading citizens, in what was termed ‘The Garden City’ due to the number of parks and public gardens. Development in the City of Malvern steadied from the 1930s, with the population averaging 45,000 until the 1990s (Victorian Places). The City of Malvern amalgamated with the City of Prahran in 1994, to form the City of Stonnington.

Place History Summary

The Catholic Church did not have a presence in Malvern until 1889 when a site in Stanhope Street was purchased and the foundation stone laid for St Joseph’s Church, a Gothic-style brick building designed by local architect George McMullen (currently serves as the parish hall) (*Prahran Telegraph*, 27 Nov 1889:2). It appears that a timber school building was constructed at the rear of this church at a similar time (*St Joseph’s Church History Group 2008:2*).

Following the creation of the Catholic Parish of Malvern in 1892, the Vincentian Fathers were given charge of the Malvern mission and built a substantial two-storey, 20-roomed presbytery to the west of the church in 1895 to designs by prolific Catholic church architect Augustus A Fritsch (*Prahran Telegraph*, 10 Aug 1895:3). This was reportedly his first commission for this denomination (Goat & Willis [ed] 2012:264). Outbuildings were added at the rear of the presbytery in 1921 and a two-storey section was added at the north-east corner of the presbytery in 1929, both to designs by architect Bart Moriarty (SHC MB4889 and MB1843). In the 1940s a low brick fence, with a pedestrian gate, was built along the front boundary of the presbytery.

Land to the west of the presbytery was purchased to enable construction of a larger church in 1908. Designed by Augustus A Fritsch in an unusual Romanesque style, this red brick church featured a bold entrance façade and was described as ‘one of the most handsome and best fitted churches in the southern suburbs’ (*Advocate*, 26 Sept 1908:20). The original 1889 church was subsequently converted for use as a parish hall.

A primary school building for girls replaced the original timber school building in 1917 (*Herald*, 23 Jan 1917:1). Architect Bart Moriarty designed this six-classroom brick school building with a billiard room, verandah and vestibule (SHC MB39) and undertook alterations to the parish hall at this time (SHC MB86). In 1941 the church purchased additional land to the east to enable construction of an adjacent boys’ primary school (*The Age*, 31 Mar 1941:8). The opening of this school was attended by boys from 20 different Melbourne parishes. Architect and builder, Robert Harper, undertook this work as well as additions to the existing girls’ school and extensive work to the parish hall (*Advocate*, 3 April 1941:5).

Two buildings occupy the west end of the Church site – a heavily modified twentieth century house to the front and a later two-storey building to the rear.

Description Summary

Situated on an extensive site on the north side of Stanhope Street, east of Glenferrie Road, the St Joseph’s Church Complex contains five main building elements – a church, presbytery, parish hall (former church) and school buildings.

Church

Key Features:

- Romanesque style, sometimes referred to as ‘Blood and Bandage’ manner
- Red brick walls with (overpainted) cement render detail
- Slate-clad roof
- Detailed symmetrical front façade with central bay comprising a banded arched entrance, simple rose window, niche with statue of St Joseph and stepped parapet, and flanking dome-capped towers
- Stepped brick buttresses and corbels and circular windows.

Presbytery

Key Features:

- Large two-storey form with verandah and balcony on three sides and central protruding gabled entrance bay
- Cement rendered brick walls (overpainted) on bluestone base
- Hipped slate-clad roof
- Cast iron verandah posts, valences, brackets and balustrading
- Substantial cement rendered chimneys
- Pairs of tall rectangular double-hung windows set into an undecorated wall.

Parish Hall (former church)

Key Features:

- Simple Gothic style



- Red brick walls with (overpainted) freestone dressings
- Steep corrugated steel-clad gabled roof
- Central steep-roofed front porch with blind pointed arch and trefoil above
- Chamfered buttresses.

1917 School building

Key features:

- Simple rectangular, gabled and hipped forms
- Red brick walls
- Terracotta tile-clad roofs
- Large multi-paned double hung windows with top lights and subtle curved window heads.

1941 School building

Key features:

- Longitudinal hipped-roof form with parapeted gable ends to side bays of the front elevation
- Dark red brick walls
- Glazed tile-clad roof
- Stepped central pediment
- Brick detailing to front parapets and gable-ends
- Wrought iron 'St Josephs' sign on façade (Advocate, 3 Apr 1941:25).

Intactness/Integrity

The church and presbytery remain highly intact to their original period of construction. School buildings and the original church (now hall) have undergone some alteration, however they retain a high degree of integrity.

References

Context Pty Ltd, Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, 2006 & 2009 addendum.

J B Cooper, *The History of Malvern, From its First Settlement to a City*, Melbourne, 1935.

Goad & Willis [ed], *Australian Architecture*, 2012.

Landata (LV), Historical Aerial Photograph, 1945.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), Plan No 61, 1901 & Plan No 1744, 1902

National Trust of Australia (Victoria), *Victorian Churches*, 1991.

Prahran Telegraph.

St Joseph's Church History Group, *The Story of the Church of St Joseph's Malvern 1908-2008*, 2008.

State Library of Victoria (SLV), images as cited.

Stonnington History Centre (SHC), Building plans and images as cited.

The Advocate.

The Age.

The Argus.

The Herald.

Victorian Places, 'Malvern' & 'Malvern East', <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au>.

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Historic Images and Plans

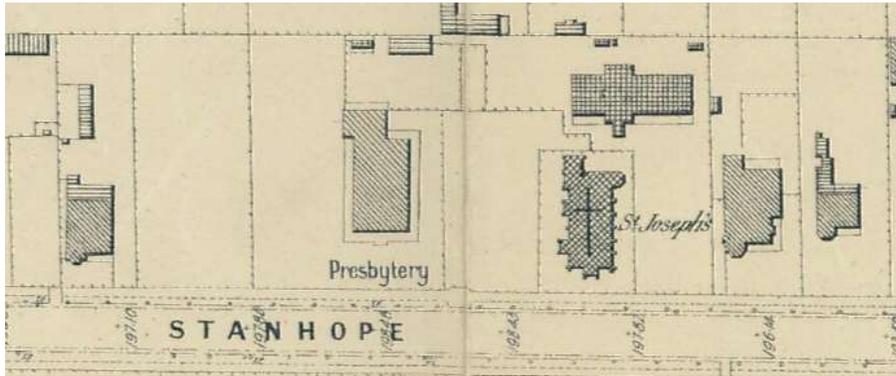


Figure 5. Detail of MMBW plan No 61, Malvern, dated 1901, showing site of St Joseph's Church Complex with the original church, presbytery and timber school building at the rear (Source: SLV)

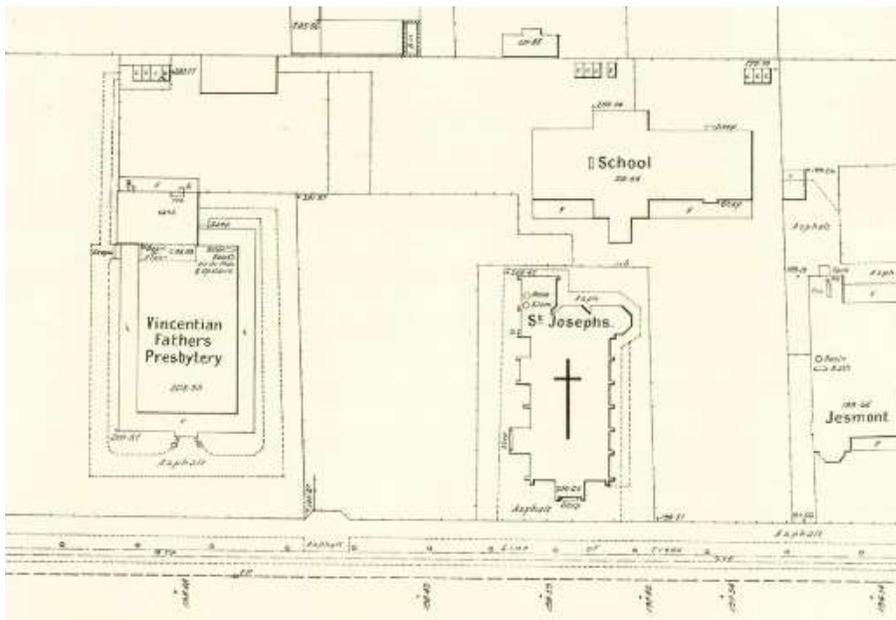


Figure 6. Detail of MMBW Plan, Malvern No 1744, dated 1902 (Source: SLV)



Figure 7. Aerial photograph dated 1945, showing extent of buildings on the site (Source: Landata)

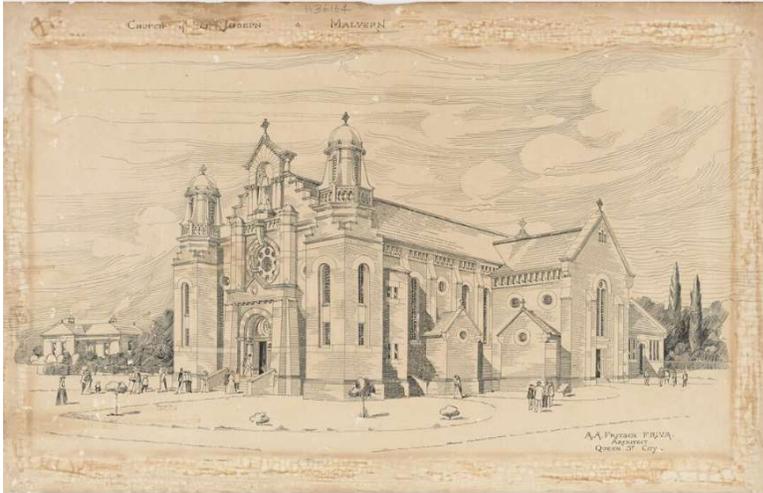


Figure 8. Perspective drawing of 1908 church by architect A A Fritsch. (Source: Collection of architectural drawings, A A Fritsch architect, SLV)



Figure 9. Perspective painting of presbytery by the architect A A Fritsch. (Source: Collection of architectural drawings, A A Fritsch architect, SLV)



Figure 10. Photograph of St Joseph's Church, Malvern, 1910-20 (Source: SLV)



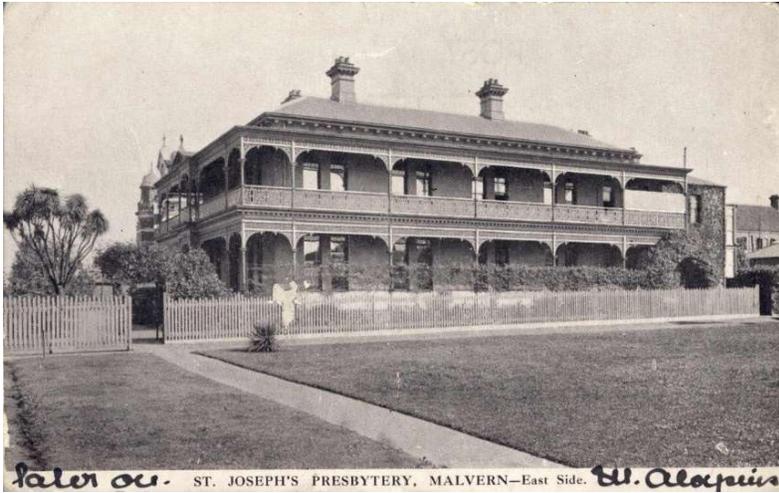


Figure 11. Photograph of St Joseph's Presbytery, Malvern, c1909-c1940 (Source: SLV)



Figure 12. View of church complex from the east, showing parish hall (former church) in the foreground, the presbytery and the church, c1918. Source: SHC Image collection MP1)