

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: ST ANDREW'S UNITING CHURCH

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Monroe Street BRANXHOLME

STUDY NUMBER: 214

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

OTHER NAME/S OF PLACE: ST ANDREW'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PRECINCT: Branxholme

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 3 **SECTION:** 12 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BRANXHOLME

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 473J B-12; VicRoads 233 S3; located on the west side of Monroe Street, 70m south of the intersection with Brown Street, in the centre of the township of Branxholme

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State

St Andrew's Uniting Church, Monroe Street, Branxholme.

Image Date: 15/01/03

EXTENT OF LISTING:

To the extent of: 1. All the building, including the interior and its fittings and fixtures, and all of the land.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

A small bluestone church in a simple but sturdy, almost rustic Gothic revival style of three bays divided by buttresses, which are paired at the corners. It is sited to face eastwards across the valley of the Arrandoovong Creek. The windows are paired and subdivided into small panes, painted white with a border of blue glass. The main part of the windows swivel at their mid point. The bluestone walls are rock faced. There is a small porch at the front with an unusual ogee arched door. There is a circular blind oeuil de boeuf in the front gable. The roofs of the nave and the porch are corrugated iron and pitched at 60 degrees.

HISTORY:

The St Andrews Uniting Church was built in 1863, the first church to be built in Branhholme. Prior to this, church services of all denominations were held in the school house at varying intervals. It is said to have been built as a Free Presbyterian Church. After a disagreement about the playing of music during services, a part of the congregation broke away to form a new Free Presbyterian congregation and to build a new church.

In early to mid 1861, meetings were held regarding the establishment of a Presbyterian Church in Branhholme, and in July, the present site in Monroe Street was purchased and a subscription list opened. At this time, tender was sought for the building of a stone church in Branhholme. Ewan McNaughton, a local builder made the successful tender, and the foundation stone for the church was laid on the 18th of November, 1861. The ceremony was attended by many influential individuals, including John McKellar of Ardachy, The Rev. Dr. Cairns of Melbourne and Rev. Angus MacDonald of Hamilton.

The trustees of the church reported to the Presbytery at Hamilton in June 1862 that their new church was ready to be opened, but they required a permanent minister and a manse for his accommodation. Although there was some delay in obtaining a minister, church services started on June 15, 1862, preaching English in the morning and Gaelic in the afternoon.

In the initial weeks of the church, there was some dispute. A part of the congregation broke away because they wished to call a minister from Scotland to preach in Gaelic. It was eventually decided that this would take too long and in 1863 the permanent minister, Reverend J. McRoberts was inducted in 1863, about the same time the manse was finished. Mrs McRoberts also began the Presbyterian Sunday School for children which she ran until 1875.

Early in 1875, Rev. McRoberts health began to fail, and he resigned from his position in October. He died at the Manse in February 1876, and the Reverend Charles Thomson MA was inducted in October 1876. Rev. Thomson remained at Branhholme for only four years, after which he resigned.

The Rev William C. Wallace, the Principal of Hamilton Ladies' College was the minister for the Branhholme Presbyterian Church between 1881 and 1905. Wallace was Moderator of Victoria in 1899, and had a keen interest in the progress of the district. Wallace was responsible for much of the 'beautification' of Branhholme, in his time there he organised huge numbers of oaks, elms, poplars and other European trees to be planted in the streets and public areas. He also was a principal player in the draining of the Condah swamp, now named Wallacedale in his honour.

Later ministers included Rev R J Houston MA, the third Minister, from 1906-1926, Rev J T Roberts, who was Minister in 1957 when new manse was first occupied. Mr W Armstrong and Mr W Begg were the first Elders.

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It may be that James Henry Fox, an architect practising in Hamilton designed the church, although its 'sturdiness' is less fine than the careful detailing demonstrated in his other work. He designed the neighbouring manse which was commenced soon after the church as well as the home of William Howarth further south in Munroe Street. Fox designed St Joseph's Catholic Church, Penshurst which was commenced in 1865. And he at least supervised and possibly designed Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Coleraine which was also commenced in 1865. Fox was a distinguished architect with important professional connections, including with the leading Gothic revivalist, William Wardell.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life

8.6 Worshipping

8.6.1 Worshipping together

8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions

8.6.4 Making places for worship

CONDITION:

The church is in excellent condition externally and internally, including its complete fittings and fixtures.

INTEGRITY:

Excellent degree of integrity.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The St Andrews Uniting Church was built in 1863, the first church to be built in Branxholme. Prior to this, church services of all denominations were held in the school house at varying intervals. It is said to have been built as a Free Presbyterian Church. After a disagreement about the playing of music during services, a part of the congregation broke away to form a new Free Presbyterian congregation and to build a new church. The church is a small bluestone structure in sturdy, almost rustic Gothic revival style. It is in good condition, and retains a good degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church is of historical and architectural significance to the state of Victoria, the Southern Grampians Shire and the township of Branxholme.

Why is it significant?

St Andrew's Uniting Church, formerly a Free Presbyterian and subsequently a Presbyterian Church is of historical significance as one of the few surviving examples of a Free Presbyterian Church in Victoria, demonstrating interdenominational division and the very strong Presbyterian influence in the south-west of the Western District. It is of architectural significance as the work of the Hamilton architect, James Henry Fox.

COMPARISON:

215 Free Presbyterian Church, Monroe Street, Branxholme

020 Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Coleraine

St Joseph's Catholic Church, Martin Street, Penshurst

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE:

28/03/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

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Include in VHR **Include in RNE** **Include in Local Planning Scheme**

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Phillips, Walter in Lewis, Miles, ed.	Victorian Churches	1991	9-10
Walter, Agnes V.	Branxholme 1843-1973	1973	27