

# HERITAGE PLACE

**NAME OF PLACE:** CATHOLIC CONVENT (FORMER)

**ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE:** 73 Watton Street PENS HurST

**STUDY NUMBER:** 268

**HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:**

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**PRECINCT:** Penshurst

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:** Southern Grampians Shire

**ALLOTMENT:** 1 & 2 **SECTION:** 7 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BORAMBORAM

**ACCESS DESCRIPTION:**

CFA 475J D11; VicRoads 233 ; located on the south-west corner of Watton and French Streets, in the middle of the township.

**SIGNIFICANCE RATING:** Local



Catholic Convent (Former) 73 Watton St Penshurst

**Image Date:** 22/04/02

**EXTENT OF LISTING:**

To the extent of: 1. All the building excluding the interior and all of the land being allotment 2 of section 7 of the township of Penshurst.

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## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The former Catholic Convent is a single storey symmetrical bluestone house with a gabled corrugated iron roof. The windows are twelve-paned, double-hung sashes. It has been extended in weatherboard at the rear, possibly replacing an earlier detached or semi-detached kitchen wing. A new verandah has been added at the front.

## HISTORY:

J. C. Watson purchased the land on which the former convent stands from the Crown on 15th December 1857. He bought allotments 1 and 2 of section 7. At some time in the early twentieth century Mrs. Chesswas, wife of the storekeeper, James George Chesswas owned the property. However, the family lived at 83 Bell Street, the former Common School, opposite their store. The Chesswas family appears to have moved from Richmond to Penshurst in 1871 when James Chesswas Senior first appears in the ratebooks described as a carrier. At that stage they rented a house owned by Michael Hoare (SMRRB, 1871, 283). Mrs. J. G. Chesswas was the daughter of Alexander Black, who was an important early councillor, active in the community and the first pound keeper. James George Chesswas, along with Robert Aitken, acted as trustee for the Temperance Hall beside the former Catholic Convent.

According to the Mount Rouse and District Historical Society, the house was built in the 1880s. From 1945 to 1975 the Sisters of Mercy nuns occupied it. The nuns taught at the nearby St Joseph's Catholic school. After 1975 it became a private residence.

## THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 4: Building settlements, towns and cities

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life  
8.12 Living in and around Australian homes  
8.14 Living in the country and rural settlements

## CONDITION:

The house is in good condition.

## INTEGRITY:

high degree of integrity to its 1960s condition

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The single storey bluestone house at 73 Watton Street, Penshurst was built in about 1880. By the early twentieth century, the Chesswas family owned it. They had moved to Penshurst from Richmond in 1871 and became storekeepers, living in the former National School opposite their store in Bell Street. In 1945, the Sisters of Mercy purchased the house and established it as a convent. The nuns taught at the St Joseph's primary school in Martin Street until 1975. Since then, the house has been owned and occupied by the O'Brien family. It is in good condition and retains a fair degree of integrity.

How is it significant?

The former Catholic convent at 73 Watton Street, Penshurst is of historical significance to the Southern Grampians Shire and to the township of Penshurst.

Why is it significant?

The former convent is of historical significance generally as a residence in the township and specifically for its

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use between 1945 and 1975 as the residence of the sisters of Mercy who ran the primary school at St Joseph's Catholic Church complex.

**COMPARISON:**

236 St Joseph's Catholic Church Complex, Martin Street, Penshurst  
069 St Joseph's Catholic Church Complex, McKenery Street, Coleraine

**ASSESSED BY:** aen

**ASSESSMENT DATE:** 06-May-02

**EXISTING LISTINGS:**

**HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

**No Recommendations for Inclusions**

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**REFERENCES:**

Author	Title	Year	Page
	Explore Historic Penshurst	2001	2
Department of Lands and Survey	Township of Penshurst, County of Villiers	1957	
Jack Chesswas	Memories From Penshurst's Past	2000	
Mount Rouse Shire Council	Shire of Mount Rouse, In the Centre of the Fertile Western District of Victoria: Centenary Celebrated	1966	

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