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**Name:** Church of St Mary the Virgin & Cemetery  
**Status:** Provisionally Registered  
**Tier:** State

**THR ID Number:** 12032  
**Municipality:** Central Highlands Council

**Location Addresses**

31 CHURCH RD, GRETNA 7140 TAS

**Title References**

125330/1

**Property Id**

5466977



Church of St Mary the Virgin, c.1999  
DPIPWE

Church of St Mary the Virgin, c.1999  
DPIPWE

Church of St Mary the Virgin  
DPIPWE, 2017

Church of St Mary the Virgin  
DPIPWE, 2017

**Setting:** The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Gretna is located in the area known as the Macquarie Plains within the Derwent Valley, in the south of Tasmania, approximately 50 kilometres from the capital, Hobart. The building and cemetery are located on a stark hillside location, overlooking the Lyell Highway on the northern side of the village of Gretna.

**Description:** **c.1848 St Mary the Virgin Church:** is a stone Gothic Revival church with steeply pitched roof clad in cement imitation slate tiles. A timber vestry is situated on the northern elevation, and stepped entrance to the church on the southern elevation. The external walls are coursed random rubble with buttresses that divide the wall into three bays. The windows containing stained glass, have cusped heads and either arched or rectangular carved label mouldings above. The interior is largely original, with rendered walls and exposed roof structure of rafters and braced collar ties. Outside the entrance a cast iron bell is mounted on a stand.  
**c.1849 St Mary the Virgin Cemetery:** surrounds the church building, although the majority of burials are located to the north of the church. There are over 300 surviving headstones and approximately 400 burials (<http://www.gravesoftas.com.au/municipalities/Bothwell/Gretna%20St%20Marys%20Anglican.htm>). The first burial in the church yard, and for the wider Macquarie Plains region, was in 1849 (TAHO, NS2062/2/1).  
**Church items:** a number of artefacts provenanced to the church building are considered of heritage significance, providing an understanding of the evolution of worship in a rural community, and the meaning of such places to the region. This registration includes the following elements of high significance:

- (i) *Carved wooden altar, executed by Ellen Nora Payne, c.1948*
- (ii) *Carved wooden reredos, executed by Ellen Nora Payne, c.1948*
- (iii) *Carved wooden hymn board, executed by Ellen Nora Payne, c.1948* ([www.nelliepayne.com](http://www.nelliepayne.com)).

**Landscape setting:** The stark rural setting of the church and cemetery is of heritage significance for its historic and aesthetic values, and as a contributing element to the main ingress/egress to the village of Gretna.

**History:** For thousands of years the region now known as Macquarie Plains, was occupied by the First Tasmanians. The practice of seasonal migration resumed in the warmer months, when the often-harsh weather in the lower central highlands was more agreeable. Following European occupation of the area, clashes with settlers regularly occurred in the region, often triggered by disputes over stock and property (Calder, 2010 p.167).

Aspirational Yorkshireman Edward Terry (1807-1868) settled in the area originally known as Macquarie Plains, but now known as Gretna, naming his property Askrigg (THR#810), after his home village in northern England. In 1848 the newly married Terry donated land for the erection of an Anglican Church (RNE & TAHO RGD37/1/4 #1303). Known colloquially as the Woolpack Church, the church took its name from the nearby pub, the Woolpack Inn. In a colony heavily populated with ex-convicts, authorities hoped churches, particularly in regional areas, would provide a moral compass for the evolving colony.

The architect for the church is unknown, however consecration of the Woolpack Church took place in the autumn of 1848 (*Courier*, 24 May 1848 p.2). The colony was emerging from a recession, attributed to competition for agricultural products and disease in livestock. The appointment of the colony's first bishop, the Rev. Nixon, saw the spread of Anglicanism, and an associated surge in the construction of churches in rural communities. Often these churches also served as important community meeting places (Roe, 2005 in Alexander [ed.] p.252). The first burial in the cemetery adjacent to the Woolpack Church was said to have been a child on 1 August 1849 (*Mercury*, 1 June 1938 p.7). Fittingly, Edward Terry, who donated the land for the church, was buried in the same churchyard at the time of his death in 1868 (*Mercury*, 20 November 1868 p.1).

For the community of Gretna, the church - later renamed St Mary the Virgin Church - became an important meeting place. Christenings, marriages and funerals were celebrated in the building. Newspaper coverage frequently mentioned warm summers and freezing winters in the region. For decades local families took part in the blessing of the fleece, to commemorate the shearing season. Farming families from local estates took turns to have a lock of fleece blessed at an annual service (*Mercury*, 16 November 1954 p.11). Community members took pride in maintaining the church and grounds. Building repairs were said to have been undertaken in 1918 and 1930 (RNE). Regular burn offs in the cemetery and the periodic tidying up of headstones were also undertaken by local residents.

Plans were made after World War II to commemorate the centenary of St Marys, including commissioning items of furniture in memory of notable parishioners. Well-known Tasmanian woodcarver Ellen Nora Payne (1854-1962) was commissioned to carve an altar, reredos and hymn board. She had recently taught woodcarving to returned soldiers but is perhaps best-known for her larger commissions such as hanging war memorials and the coat of arms for the Parliament of Tasmania. The Governor of Tasmania attended the centenary celebrations at Gretna

(<http://nelliepayne.com/2015/12/29/st-marys-church-gretna-altar-reredos-hymn-board-carved-1948/>).

Like many rural churches, the St Mary's congregation struggled post World War II to find funds to maintain the church building (*Westerner*, 10 July 1980 p.10). The church remains an important part of community life and has meaning to the many Tasmanians descended from residents buried in the cemetery.

#### References:

[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

Calder, G. 2010 *Levee, Line and Martial Law: A History of the Dispossession of the Mairremmener People of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1832*, Fullers Publishing.

*Courier*, 24 May 1848.

[www.gravesoftas.com.au](http://www.gravesoftas.com.au)

*Mercury*, 20 November 1868, 1 June 1938, 16 November 1954.

[www.nelliepayne.com](http://www.nelliepayne.com)

Register of the National Estate, Church of St Mary, Gretna.

Roe, M. 2005 'Nixon, Francis Russell' in Alexander, A. (ed.) *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, University of Tasmania.

TAHO, RGD37/1/4, #1303.

#### **Statement of Significance:** (non-statutory summary)

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Cemetery and ecclesiastical collection at 31 Church Road, Gretna, is of historic cultural heritage significance as they demonstrate the pattern of European settlement into the interior of Van Diemen's Land, the evolution from convict colony to self-governing state and the role of established religion in developing spiritual meeting places throughout Tasmania. The Church of St Mary the Virgin and Cemetery reflects the principal characteristics of a Gothic Revival church, through the use of stonework, steeply pitched roof, and stained-glass windows. The choice of stone as a building material harks back to the early phase of the development of the colony by Europeans when local stone was the predominant building material. The suite of collection material contained within St Mary the Virgin is representative of ecclesiastical furniture contained within rural Tasmanian churches and has a special association with woodcarver Ellen Nora Payne (1865-1962), the leading female woodcarver of her generation and responsible for some of Tasmania's finest church carvings of the 20th century.

#### **Significance:**

The Heritage Council may enter a place in the Heritage Register if it meets one or more of the following criteria from the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995:

##### **a) The place is important to the course or pattern of Tasmania's history.**

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Cemetery and ecclesiastical collection are important elements demonstrating the evolutionary pattern of regional Tasmania. They reflect the role of worship and in particular, the role of established religion in developing social and spiritual hubs in regional settlements across the colony. Erected in the 1840s, the Anglican Church's presence on the site is an historic record of religious life in the Macquarie Plains, demonstrating aspects of the community's aspirations, development, and growth.

##### **b) The place possesses uncommon or rare aspects of Tasmania's history.**

No Data Recorded

- c) **The place has the potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Tasmania's history.**

No Data Recorded

- d) **The place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of place in Tasmania's history.**

The Church of St Mary the Virgin and Cemetery reflects the principal characteristics of a Gothic Revival church , using stonework, steeply pitched roof, and stained-glass windows. The choice of stone as a building material harks back to the early phase of the Macquarie Plains development by Europeans when local stone was the predominant building material. The suite of collection material contained within St Mary the Virgin is representative of ecclesiastical furniture contained within rural Tasmanian churches.

- e) **The place is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement.**

No Data Recorded

- f) **The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social or spiritual reasons.**

No Data Recorded

- g) **The place has a special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Tasmania's history.**

The Church of St Mary the Virgin and ecclesiastical collection has a special association with Tasmanian woodcarver Ellen Nora Payne (1865-1962), who carved an altar, reredos and hymn board for the church. Payne was the leading female woodcarver of her generation, a practicing Anglican and responsible for some of Tasmania's finest church carvings of the 20th century.

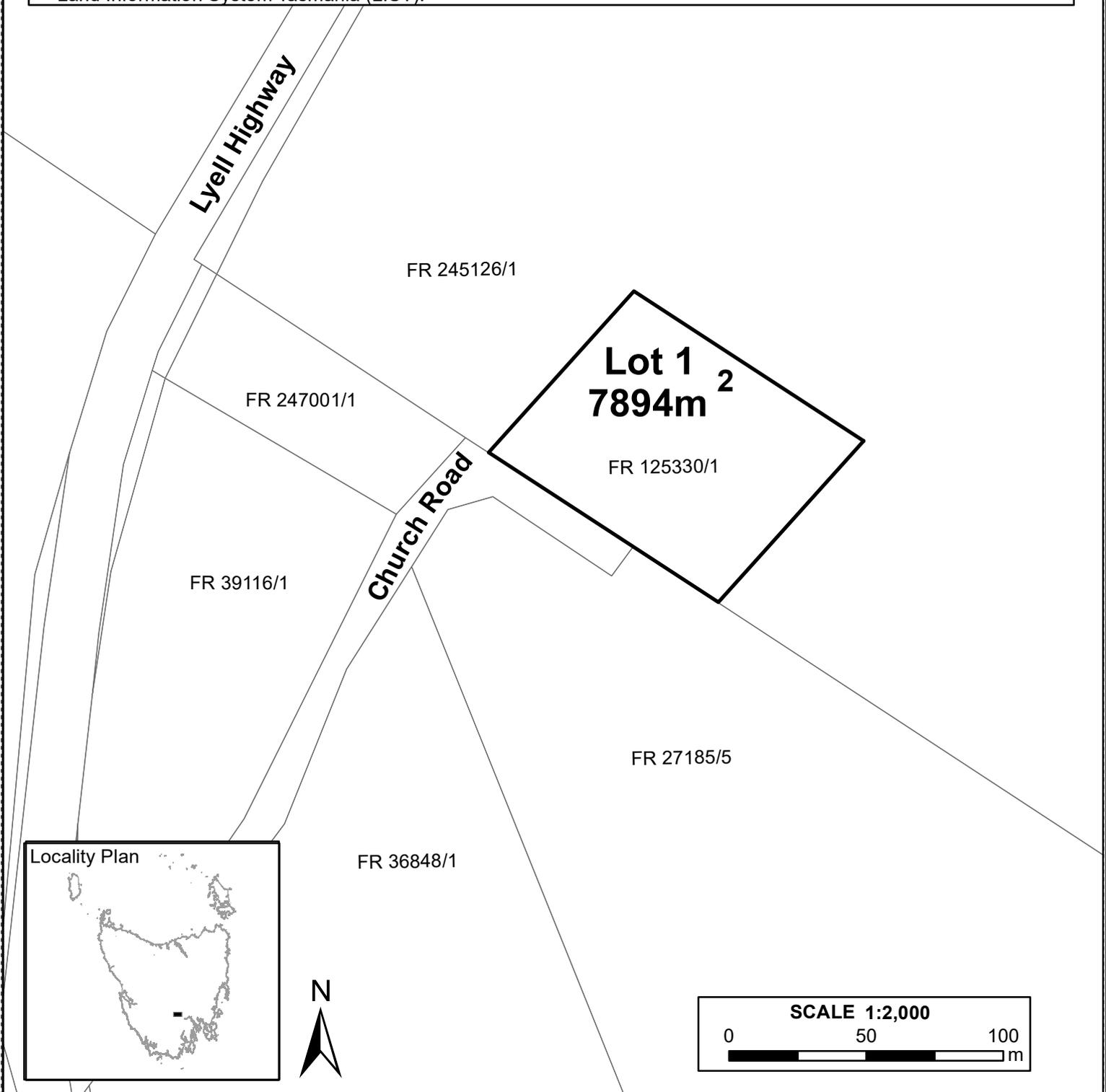
- h) **The place is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.**

No Data Recorded

**PLEASE NOTE** This data sheet is intended to provide sufficient information and justification for listing the place on the Heritage Register. Under the legislation, only one of the criteria needs to be met. The data sheet is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of the heritage values of the place, there may be other heritage values of interest to the Heritage Council not currently acknowledged.

### Note

1. Lot 1 represents the registered boundary for 'Church of St Mary the Virgin & Cemetery', #12032 on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.
2. Lot 1 is the whole parcel of FR 125330/1, the boundary of which is marked by a heavy black line and described below.
3. All boundaries are parcel boundaries, details of individual land parcel boundaries may be accessed through the Land Information System Tasmania (LIST).



**TASMAP:** BUSHY PARK - 4827    **GRID:** MGA94 / ZONE 55    **DATUM:** AHD    **CONTOUR INTERVAL:** N/A

No.	PRODUCTION / AMENDMENT	AUTHORITY	REFERENCE	DRAWN	APPROVED	DATE
1	Production	THC	12032	AW	A.ROBERTS	30.6.21



**Church of St Mary the Virgin & Cemetery**  
 31 Church Road, Gretna

PREPARED BY  
 HERITAGE TASMANIA



**CENTRAL PLAN REGISTER**

p.p. Surveyor General: 

Date Registered: 7.7.21



**CPR**  
**11072**