



## St. Leonard's Catholic School, Naremburn

### “The school that was lost?”

*In 1894 a small Catholic school was established next to 53 Market St, Naremburn. Information as to which side of 53 the school was built has been lost. In 1904 the school relocated to 49 Market St before finally getting lost in Willoughby Rd, Naremburn when the school was called **St Leonard's** Catholic School.*

*The final chapter in the loss of the school is about to be played out with the Catholic church proposing to demolish the former school buildings.*

*St Leonards Catholic School possesses significant cultural values that will be lost unless appropriately acknowledged and preserved.*

## Cultural significance of the school

Submission in response to DA 2021/340

© Fogarty, T, BA (Hon 1), M.Ed (Dean's Medal)

Willoughby District Historical Society & Museum 2022

**Acknowledgement:** The country on which the St Leonard's Catholic Church, School, Convent and Presbytery were built being originally Aboriginal country is acknowledged, along with Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging. This country is, was and always will be Aboriginal.

### *Author profile*

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# Contents

Author profile.....	2
St Leonard’s Catholic School, Naremburn .....	5
SUMMARY OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE .....	5
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:.....	6
Central Township Naremburn.....	6
SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE .....	7
Politics of religion.....	8
ASSOCIATIVE SIGNIFICANCE:.....	9
AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE: .....	9
SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE: .....	9
TECHNICAL SIGNIFICANCE:.....	10
REPRESENTATIVE SIGNIFICANCE: .....	10
RARITY SIGNIFICANCE: .....	10
ST LEONARD’S CATHOLIC LANDS IN NAREMBURN.....	11
Heritage context.....	11
Proposed development .....	13
History of the site .....	15
Pre 1894 Merrenburn Estate .....	15
1894 school .....	15
1904 replacement school.....	16
1912 new site selected .....	16
1932 new school .....	16
Buildings .....	19
Former school buildings .....	19
Exteriors .....	19
Interiors.....	20
Convent .....	20
Condition & integrity of the buildings.....	22
recommendations .....	23
APPENDIX.....	24
DETAILED Cultural significance .....	24
Historical significance.....	24
First school in Naremburn.....	24
Early land grant .....	24

.....	24
Merrenburn Estate.....	24
Foundation stone .....	25
Sisters of St Joseph Mother House, Mount St, North Sydney .....	25
Purchase of catholic school sites: .....	25
Gender power imbalance in the Catholic Church .....	26
Social significance.....	27
.....	28
Political SIGNIFICANCE .....	28
Constraining catholic schooling .....	28
Education policy in NSW .....	28
State aid .....	29
Catholic political re-action .....	30
Associative significance .....	31
Saint Mary McKillop .....	31
Archbishop Roger Vaughan .....	32
Archbishop Kelly.....	33
Cardinal Moran .....	33
Henry Lawson.....	34
Bishop Ingham .....	34
Francis De Groot .....	34
Mrs. T.J. Dalton (nee Nugent) .....	34
Aesthetic significance.....	35
Spiritual significance.....	36
Technical significance.....	36
Sprung hall floor.....	36
Re-cycling of materials.....	37
Representativeness .....	38
Complex consolidated facilities .....	38
Rarity .....	39
Heritage listed school buildings .....	39
Moveable artefact - Foundation stone .....	39
Why St Leonard's for a school in Naremburn? .....	40

# St Leonard's Catholic School, Naremburn

It is proposed to demolish buildings of the former St Leonard's Catholic School <sup>1</sup> at the corner of Merrenburn Ave and Willoughby Rd, Naremburn. The school buildings have deep local, state, national and arguably, international significance.

The antecedents of the school lays with a small school building (also used as a church) in Market St, Naremburn, established in 1884 as St John the Baptist. In 1904 a school and church was built in the immediate area <sup>2</sup>. In 1913 the church relocated to Donnelly Rd in Naremburn and re-opened as St Leonard's Catholic Church. The presbytery on the site opened in 1919 in Donnelly Rd. Then in 1932 the school moved to the corner of Merrenburn Ave and Willoughby Rd (behind the church). The convent of the Sisters of St Joseph of Mary of the Cross opened next door in 1935. This also included a Juniorate.

The current proposal to replace the existing school buildings with 3-metre-high residential dwellings does nothing to maintain nor enhance the architectural consistency across the various heritage quality buildings on the site.

## SUMMARY OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

***The cultural significance of the buildings to be demolished has been assessed using the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter with reference to the Statement of Heritage Significance submitted with the Development Application.***

It is the author's view that the statement of significance submitted with the Development Application is tokenistic (at best) and fails even to consider some heads of consideration of the Burra Charter (such as Spirituality). This is doubly concerning given the amount of readily available published material relating to the site. Particularly, that available on TROVE. Elsewhere, the heritage significance statements are cursory and many aspects of the cultural significance of the site have not been reported.

It is also concerning that largely the Heritage Consultant's relied heavily on tertiary sources rather than taking a more evidence-based approach.

One can only hope that the Assessing Officer fully considers all of the documented significance of the site.

**Further detailed information on aspects of the cultural significance of St Leonard's Catholic School, Naremburn are provided later in this assessment.**

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<sup>1</sup> The name St Leonard's Catholic School is used to describe the school buildings at two sites in Naremburn. The first dated to 1884 in Market St, known as St John the Baptist. This closed in 1931 and opened as St Leonard's in 1932 on the corner of Willoughby Rd and Merrenburn Ave.

<sup>2</sup> Centenary Booklet p.8

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

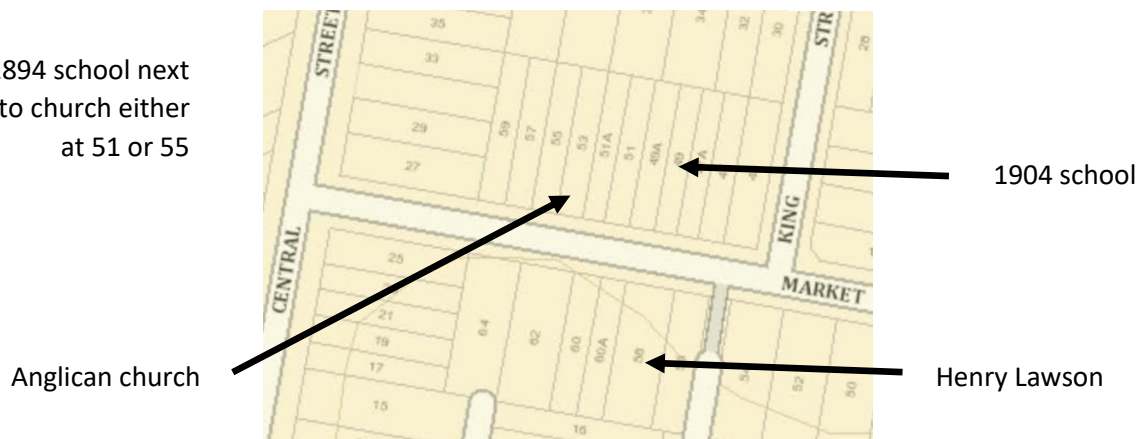
### *Central Township Naremburn*

The initial commercial centre in Naremburn was on Market St. It was known as 'Dog Town' and later as the Central Township. The first Anglican Church in the area was built at 53 Market St, Naremburn.<sup>3</sup> In 1883. Then in 1894 a Catholic school opened the northside of Market St alongside the church.<sup>4</sup> A replacement Catholic school opened in 1904 appears to have been located at 49 Market St on the former site of a post office and shops.<sup>5</sup>

In 1906/7, renowned poet, Henry Lawson lived at 58 Market, St which he said was opposite a catholic school.<sup>6</sup>

*Merremburn Estate - PW #10728*

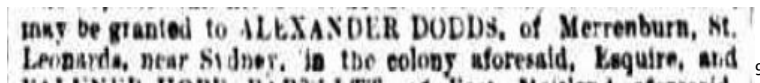
- 1894 school next to church either at 51 or 55



"Dog Town" Naremburn

The school established by the Sisters of St Joseph in market St was the **first school in Naremburn**.

The later school in Merrenburn Ave was built on land that was part of the Alexander Dodds Estate which was part of the **original land grant** of JS Ryan<sup>7</sup> in 1849. This portion of the Estate was generally known as **Dodds Picnic Grounds**.<sup>8</sup>



After the grant was sub-divided one part was known as the Merrenburn Estate<sup>10</sup> (on the corner of Merrenburn Ave, Willoughby Rd and Donnelly Rd).



*Merrenburn Estate*

<sup>3</sup> Wilksch, E. 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby City Council, Chatswood p.114

<sup>4</sup> Wilksch p.39

<sup>5</sup> Wilksch p.79

<sup>6</sup> From Henry Lawson, Letters 1890-1922, Colin Roderick (ed.), Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1970.) quoted in Wilksch, E 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby Council p.55

<sup>7</sup> This grant may have been to Thos. Ryan – Naremburn, 1900, Freeman's Journal, Sydney 27 October p.24

<sup>8</sup> DODDS, 1884, The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June p.2

<sup>9</sup> This information throws light on the name of the area of the Merrenburn Estate being originally located in St LEONARDS. So, the Diocese may have selected St Leonard's of Pumice because the land was located in St Leonards.

<sup>10</sup> Image after Picture Willoughby #10726 1910.

The house that had been built on the **Merrenburn Estate** was described as:

**NORTH SHORE.**—Merrenburn, North Sydney-road.—Residence containing 12 rooms and complete domestic offices, outhouses, stables, coachhouse, &c. Replete with every convenience; large area of land, flower and kitchen gardens; convenient to tram, train, 'bus passes door. Stanway and Slack, The Arcade, Milson's Point.

11

The house was substantial, ideally suited for a range of habitation. After the sisters of St Joseph purchased the property was used as a Convent and Juniorate for the Sisters. As well as providing lodgings for school boarders.

There is a foundation stone from the church that for many years lay in the yard of the school. This stone has been restored and is currently located on the former school land.

The **Sisters of St Joseph** purchased the Merrenburn Estate c.1912 with the purpose of opening a Juniorate in connection with their Mother House, Mount Street, North Sydney.<sup>12</sup>

When St Leonard's Catholic School opened in Willoughby Rd, Archbishop Kelly specifically acknowledged Mother Mary McKillop's direct connection with the site.

**Purchase of catholic school sites:** Traditionally school sites would be purchased by the local parish and used by teaching orders. In the case of St Leonard's Catholic school, the site on which it stands was purchased by the Sisters of St Joseph. This was partly related to the fact that the St Joseph Nuns were chaptered as an 'Institute' where the nuns retained a high degree of autonomy.

## SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Framing any assessment of cultural significance when considering a school is the underlying emotions of former students (and teachers and family members), particularly in relation to a variety of '**Rites of Passage**'. The memories formed during our school days stay with us forever. These memories are often 're-lived' with regular re-unions of students. The loss of a school ranks not particularly distant behind other emotional losses such as that of parents, spouse, or children. Next to family, irrespective of our religion (or not) community binds us together.

AS recorded in the school's one hundred year's celebrations booklet, student reminiscences included: first communion; the tuckshop; school office; photo days; concerts; class sizes; a single TV; schoolyard games; choir (p.16). Housie<sup>13</sup> nights; music and dance in the hall; fashion parades; P&F<sup>14</sup> Model Mums; wine & cheese nights; International food nights; excursions; Irish dancing<sup>15</sup>; Eisteddfods; school uniform; Balls (p.17). BBQ & Fete; Chocolate Wheel; pony rides; progressive dinners; father's working bees; dances; walkathons; Catholic Youth Organisation<sup>16</sup>; Ballroom, Jazz & Rock dances; sport (p.18). First day at school; playground; play lunch (P.21). Nuns and priests (p.23). School fees; medals and



*School dance 1949*

<sup>11</sup> Merrenburn, 1894, The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August p.5

<sup>12</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, 1912, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 25 January p.36.

<sup>13</sup> Catholic equivalent of Bingo

<sup>14</sup> Catholic Parents & Friends – equivalent of Parents & Citizens

<sup>15</sup> Traditionally Catholic pastime

<sup>16</sup> Social club for young Catholics

discipline (p.24). Long desks with inkwells; exercise books; and a “few strokes of the cane” (p.25). the nephew of De Groot; physical culture (p.27) and later, Nintendo and swimming carnivals (p.49).

### *Politics of religion*

A review of the impact of political imperatives and education policy during the late 19th and early 20th century on St Leonard’s School in Naremburn identifies the perilous position of Catholic education.

Since the mid-19th Century successive state governments of NSW implemented legislation and policies based on a secular ideology that **severely constrained Catholic education**. This was enacted by restricting the autonomy of and withholding financial support to Catholic. In response, the catholic hierarchy embarked on a vitriolic campaign of political invective often delivered from church pulpits at parish level. It was with this background that St Leonard’s Catholic School at Naremburn was established and operated for 102 years between 1884 to 1996.

Since 1820 the colonial administration supported efforts of the major religious denominations to provide schools for the ‘coming generations’ as a way to instruct in literacy and numeracy, character and values. However, later, **education policy in NSW changed** with various legislation such as the establishment in 1848 of a Board of National Education, the 1866 Public School Act and the 1880 Public Instruction Act promoted Public Education to as the supported paradigm.

With the 1880 Act the church’s worst nightmare arrived, **removing all substantive state aid to denominational schools**.

**Catholic political re-action** to changing educational policies was vitriolic. In **1879** The Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Vaughan, delivered a Manifesto in which he encouraged his priests to condemn the principles of secular education from the pulpit. The condemnation was on the basis that:

*“contravening Christian religion and because such schools are “seed plots of future immortality, infidelity, and lawlessness, being calculated to debase the standards of human excellence and to corrupt the political, social, and individual life of future citizens.”*<sup>17</sup> 1879

It was not then unusual for a Cardinal, Bishop, Monsignor or Parish Priest to speak out from the pulpit about the injustices of Catholic school education autonomy and funding.

On the opening of St Leonard’s Presbytery in 1919, Archbishop Barry took a highly political stance on matters of government funding and wages policy.

In 1884, the first (catholic) school at Naremburn ‘bucked the trend’, was established (and persisted for the next 102 years). **This achievement was largely based on the vision of Archbishop Roger Vaughan and Mother Mary McKillop.**

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<sup>17</sup> Vaughan, R, 1879 Important Roman Catholic Manifesto, *Evening News* p. 3.



## ASSOCIATIVE SIGNIFICANCE:

The school was directly associated with **St Mary McKillop** who had raised the funds needed for the purchase of the “Merrenburn Estate” on which the school was built <sup>18</sup>. It is believed that McKillop had chosen the site as suited for a Convent and Juniorate and for housing boarders who attended the school plus some of whom moved on to the Novitiate at the mother house in North Sydney.

The school was part of a religious precinct established on the former Merrenburn Estate comprising a church, presbytery, school and convent/Juniorate. Both the church and presbytery have been heritage listed. The school and convent are part of the same narrative and deserving of heritage recognition.



*1 Mother Mary McKillop*

Throughout the history of St Leonard's School successive senior clergy (Archbishops/Bishops) of the catholic church officiated at functions or were associated with events relating to the school. This included the likes of **Vaughan, Kelly, and Moran**. To the one they took the opportunity by a pulpit address to criticise, vilify and sometime, demonise NSW educational policy and the politics that denied the church educational autonomy but with state financial aid.

Even **Henry Lawson** who lived for a time in Market St, Naremburn mentioned that his abode was opposite the school.

There are also a number of prominent former students of the school including: a **de Groot, Mrs Dalton, and Bishop Ingham**.

## AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE:

The scale and location of the former school buildings complement the aesthetics of the heritage listed St Leonard's Church and the presbytery and convent. Together they clearly present the religious focus of the site at a local level. The buildings also complement other heritage listed public buildings in the immediate area including the former Naremburn Public School and St Cuthbert's Anglican church. The former school buildings provide an architectural connection between St Leonard's and St Cuthbert's Churches.

## SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE:

A key and underlying construct in relation to a catholic school are matters of spirituality. For former students (and teachers and family members) there are a variety of **'Religious Rites of Passage.'**



of

*First communion 1935*

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<sup>18</sup> This was not the only instance where a senior woman in the church directly personally raised funds for the school. In 1977 Sister Helen Campbell was granted \$83,000 by the School's Commission. This was about 74% of an upgrade/additions program? \$40,000 was paid by the Parish. The projects included new toilets, staffroom, covered link between hall and Infants' area, the tuckshop and new fire stairs. (Centenary Booklet p.9).

In addition, the site has a deeper spiritual significance associated with the **ethos of Catholic schooling**.

St Leonard's was a catholic school. As such there are a variety of religious ritual associated with its operations. This was particularly so given that its hall was also used by the church for associated religious celebration. Significant events included First Communion breakfasts, confirmation sacraments. Additionally, as a school students developed deep, and meaningful memories associated with their schooling and schoolmate. 'Rites of passage' included class reunions, balls, and fundraising events such as fetes.

## TECHNICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

There is an intriguing feature of the school hall in that it contains a '**sprung floor**'. This provided 'softer landing' for dance, aerobics, and other physical activities. After the school closed, the hall was used by the local "Kick Dancing Group" for many years. KICK has trained hundreds of students in the performing arts. Many of whom who have gone on to professional performances in Sydney.

Another fact of technical significance is the degree of **re-cycling of building materials** from earlier church/school sites when building new facilities

## REPRESENTATIVE SIGNIFICANCE:

The four co-located religious buildings (church, presbytery, convent, and school) are representative of **typical catholic facilities across NSW and Australia**. Unfortunately, in the city, many such sites have been lost to demolition and re-development due to financial imperatives.

## RARITY SIGNIFICANCE:

**Over ninety (60) school sites** have been identified across the Willoughby Council area since 1860. **A mere seven (7) of those sites have buildings that have been Heritage Listed** <sup>19</sup> under the current Willoughby Local Environmental Plan (LEP). Of the seven listings, **five (5) related to government schools** with one independent school (c) and **a single school hall at the single Catholic St Phillip Neri School. No Catholic school buildings in Willoughby have been Heritage Listed.** <sup>20</sup> Catholic school buildings are blatantly under-represented in the Heritage LEP. Acknowledging the cultural significance of the St Leonard's Catholic School buildings would go a long way to redress recognition of artefacts of the Catholic culture of a substantial proportion of the citizens of Willoughby since it was Incorporated in 1865.

**There is sufficient evidence that the school buildings should appropriately acknowledged as being of significant local, state, national (and arguably) international cultural significance for a variety of communities. Still within the grounds of the school there is a historical foundation stone. The name of the school** itself is rare. Whilst the school is located in Naremburn, it bears the name 'St Leonard's'.

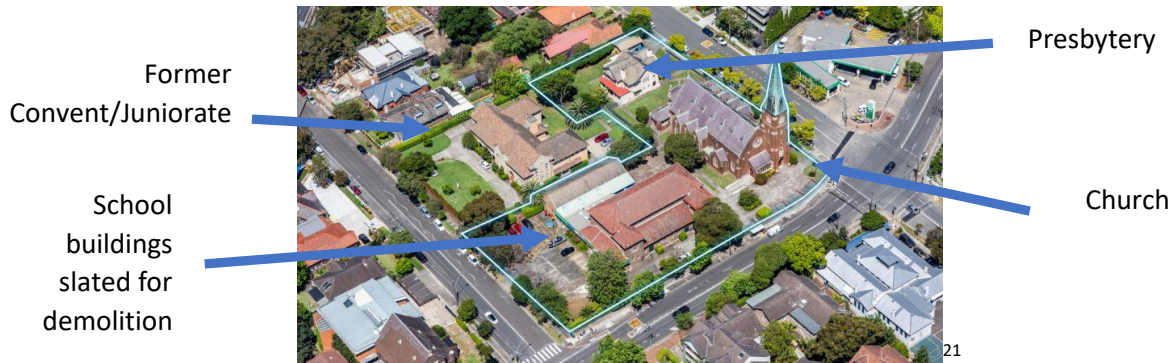
Whilst an area known as St Leonard's once covered a major portion of the Lower North Shore, the name did not directly emanate from that source. Rather, the associated Church was given the patronage of **St Leonard of Port Maurice**.

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<sup>19</sup> Chatswood Public School, Glenaeon, Naremburn Public School, St Phillip Neri School, Northbridge Public School, Willoughby Girls High School and Willoughby Public Schools.

<sup>20</sup> Apart from a school hall.

## ST LEONARD'S CATHOLIC LANDS IN NAREMBURN

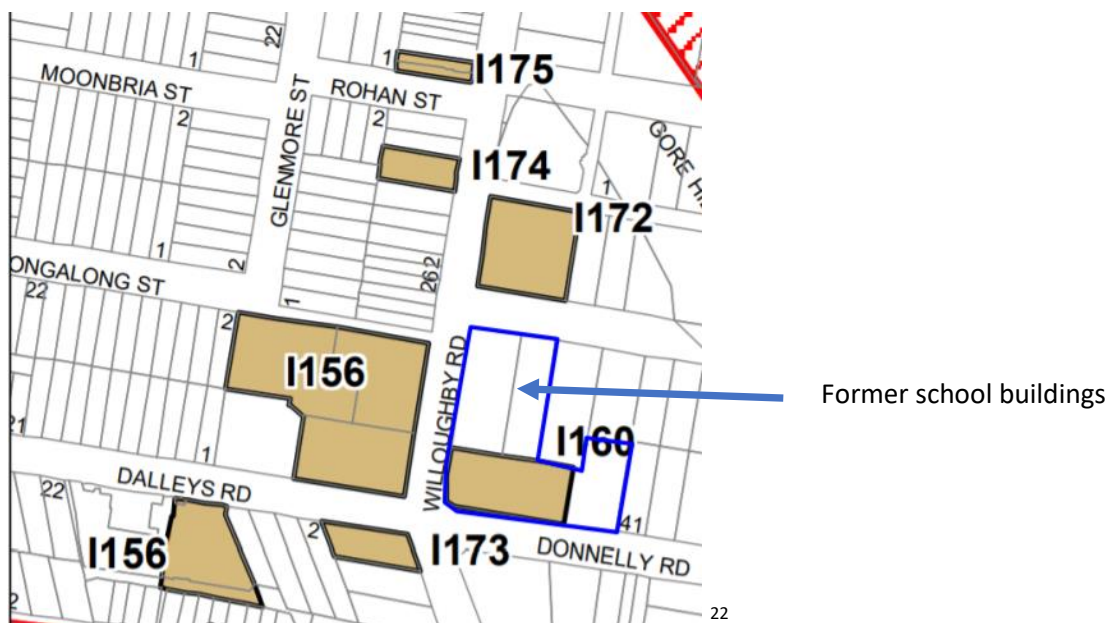


### HERITAGE CONTEXT

The lands in Naremburn occupied by the current St Leonard's Catholic Church, Presbytery and School and the former convent/Juniorate fronting Merrenburn Ave, Willoughby Rd and Donnelly Rd was formerly known as the "Merrenburn Estate" that occupied an early land grant colloquially known as "Dodds Picnic Grounds". Initially, the Church, Convent and Presbytery were Heritage Listed. This changed with the current LEP where now only the Church is Heritage Listed. Previously, the convent site appeared to have been divested by the church.

The buildings of the former St Leonard's Catholic School whilst not Heritage Listed have substantive cultural meaning for former students and the local community. Events associated with the site also frame a variety of seminal political and historical themes. The specifics related to the site assist exemplify the wider historical framework.

In context, the former school forms part of a significant Heritage Precinct along Willoughby Rd between Rohan St and Dalleys/Donnelly Rds.



<sup>21</sup> Heritage Analysis: Draft St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan, 2018, Weir Phillips Heritage

<sup>22</sup> Heritage Analysis: Draft St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan, 2018, Weir Phillips Heritage

Within this precinct are the St Leonard's Catholic Church (I160), the former Naremburn Public School (I156), St Cuthbert's Anglican Church (I172), residential dwelling (I173), group of shops (I174), and shops (I175). The school is immediately adjacent to St Leonard's Catholic Church in Willoughby Rd.

There is a crucial aspect of heritage significance of the school building that was not canvassed in the Consultant's Heritage Review.<sup>23</sup>



*St Cuthbert's Church - St Leonard's School - St Leonards Church*

As shown above, the school building fronting Willoughby Rd provides an architecturally meaningful and aesthetic significance between St Cuthbert's Church (foreground site 160 NS St Leonard's Church site 172). '

The protagonist's proposal for a modern building (see below) between the two Heritage Listed Churches removes a key piece of heritage on the site and its associated meaning.



*St Cuthbert's Church - NEW RESIDENTIAL BUILDING - St Leonard's Church*

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<sup>23</sup> After Picture Willoughby #1153, 1978



## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The church is now proposing to re-develop the school site for the construction of 12 metre<sup>24</sup> high “seniors” style housing.

It is proposed to demolish existing (unused) school buildings and replace them with medium density residential buildings. It is claimed that the proposed development will result in high quality architectural and urban design which is essential to respond to the existing character of the surrounding area as well as the St Leonard’s Church. It is hoped that this will attract additional residents and visitors to the site which would provide the opportunity to appreciate the church building on the site.

A joint letter by reverends Anthony Randazzo and Brian Moloney included in the plans added the project *“will enable the parish to continue to maintain and enhance the existing church as well as deliver on its pastoral mission within the community”* and *“It is also hoped that the project will deliver finances to provide additional pastoral initiatives within the community and to offer support to parishes beyond the catholic lower north shore parish that do not have the means to offer effective ministry to their communities.”* . *“First and foremost, the development will enable the Parish to maintain the significant costs required in preserving the heritage listed church on site and will provide for a contemporary parish hall from which parish and community events can be hosted as well as Priests’ accommodation and underground parking for parishioners”*.<sup>25</sup>



*Current façade*

*Proposed façade  
Cnr. Merrenburn Ave & Willoughby Rd*

The new buildings would stand up to three-storeys tall. It is clear from the above images that the proposed new structures will neither complement nor enhance the streetscape in Willoughby Rd nor the contextualisation and coherency of the current school buildings to the church and nearby St Cuthbert’s church. It is proposed to demolish the former school buildings (classrooms & hall) of the St Leonard’s Catholic School, Naremburn (Willoughby City Council DA 2021/340).

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<sup>24</sup> Pallison, M. (2020) Church seeks development partner at Naremburn, realestateesources.com

<sup>25</sup> Barwell, d. 2021, st leonard’s church naremburn: \$20.6m development plan for historic site, north shore times

**There is substantive cultural heritage associated with the site that should be recognised, documented, and celebrated.**

According to renowned philosopher Michel Foucault:

*“schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions - to define, classify, control, and regulate people”.*

Whilst many people have recollections of school along the lines above for many ex-students their school days evoke a variety of emotions and fond memories that last their whole life. Many social “Rites of Passage” are associated with our days at school. The loss of a school will have similar impact on ex-students as any other life loss. It behoves society to sensitively manage the transition of a school.

## HISTORY OF THE SITE



*Merrenburn Estate*

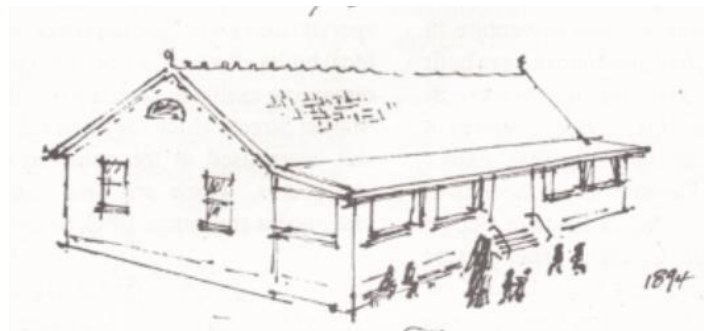
### *Pre 1894 Merrenburn Estate*

The allotments of the former Merrenburn Estate (Church, Presbytery, School and Convent) have high historical significance having been associated with an early land grant and its purchase by Mother Mary McKillop for the construction of the school.

offices. The block of ground on which the building stands was a generous gift to the parish by the Sisters of St. Joseph. <sup>26</sup>

At the opening of the Presbytery, Archbishop Barry also included highly political comments in his address. (refer under sub-section on political significance for further details).

### *1894 school <sup>27</sup>*



*Sketch by Michael Christie (1894)*

In 1894 a temporary St John the Baptist School <sup>28</sup> (also used as a Church), staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph, opened in Market St, Naremburn. <sup>29</sup> This was the **FIRST SCHOOL IN NAREMBURN** <sup>30</sup>

**St. John the Baptist, Naremburn.**  
In the Church of St. John the Baptist,  
Naremburn, Easter Sunday was celebrated <sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> New Presbytery at Naremburn, The Catholic Press, Sydney 30 Oct 1919 p. 18

<sup>27</sup> From a philosophical **perspective our two/three schools are one**, figuratively part of the 'Ship of Theseus' <sup>27</sup> that houses the spiritual and other memories of the buildings that were subsequently called St Leonard's Catholic School.

<sup>28</sup> Naremburn, 1915, Freeman's Journal, Sydney, 22 July, p.27

<sup>29</sup> Next to St Cuthbert's C of E Church.

<sup>30</sup> Naremburn Public School opened in 1887

<sup>31</sup> St John the Baptist, Naremburn, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 11 Apr 1912, p.23

### 1904 replacement school

In 1904 a replacement church and school were opened on a nearby site in Market St by Cardinal Moran. The school operated on the original site until 1931 when it moved to Willoughby Rd.<sup>32</sup>

It appears that the district having outgrown the temporary school structure, or rather the school's further utility as a structure having come into question, the priests and people of the district are about to build a new school-church. It was to lay and

33

The new school-church is to be a building 70 feet long by 30 feet wide, built of brick on stone foundations, and roofed with slates, the design being "Romanesque." There will be a porch in front, and a retiring-room or vestry at the rear. The building will accommodate 500 persons. The architect is Mr. T. J. McCarthy, of Walker-street, North Sydney, and the contractor Mr. O'Hare, of Leichhardt.

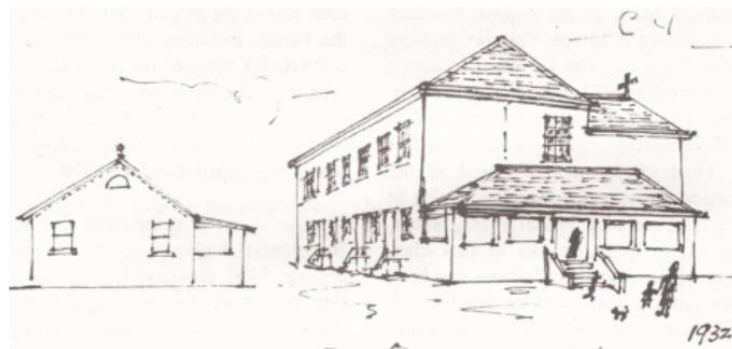
34

### 1912 new site selected

In 1912 a new site for a Church was acquired on the corner of Donnelly Rd and Willoughby Rd, Naremburn. The site was part of an original (1849) land grant. The Sisters of St Joseph had purchased the site for a school and convent. They then gifted part of the land to the Catholic Parish for a Church. Known as St Leonard's, Naremburn.

*The area included in the church property comprises 2½ acres of land, with frontages to three streets. The building, which is to be of brick, is 337ft. long, - and over all thru transepts the width will be 72 feet. To other parts the church will lie 421 feet wide. There is to be seating accommodation for 3009 persons when the building is fully completed, The contract price for the first portion is £3430.*<sup>35</sup>

### 1932 new school



Sketch 1932 by Michael Christie

<sup>32</sup> St John the Baptist, Naremburn, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 11 April 1912 p.23

<sup>33</sup> Naremburn new school, Freeman's Journal, Sydney, 27 Feb 1904 p. 27

<sup>34</sup> Naremburn New School, Freeman's Journal, 27 Feb 1904 p.27

<sup>35</sup> Church extension, The Daily Telegraph, Sydney, 14 Apr 1913 p.11



New school classrooms and a hall were built on Willoughby Rd site in 1932.<sup>36</sup> The Convent was opened in 1935. Three additional classrooms to cater for increased student numbers were built in 1936. Kindergarten rooms were completed in 1937. The secondary school classes ceased in 1945.



*Sketch 1986<sup>37</sup> by Terry Fogarty*



*Sketch by Michael Christie*

**The school closed in 1996.**

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<sup>36</sup> After closure of the Market St school in 1931.

<sup>37</sup> Based on photograph Picture Willoughby, Willoughby City Council 001472

It is reported that:

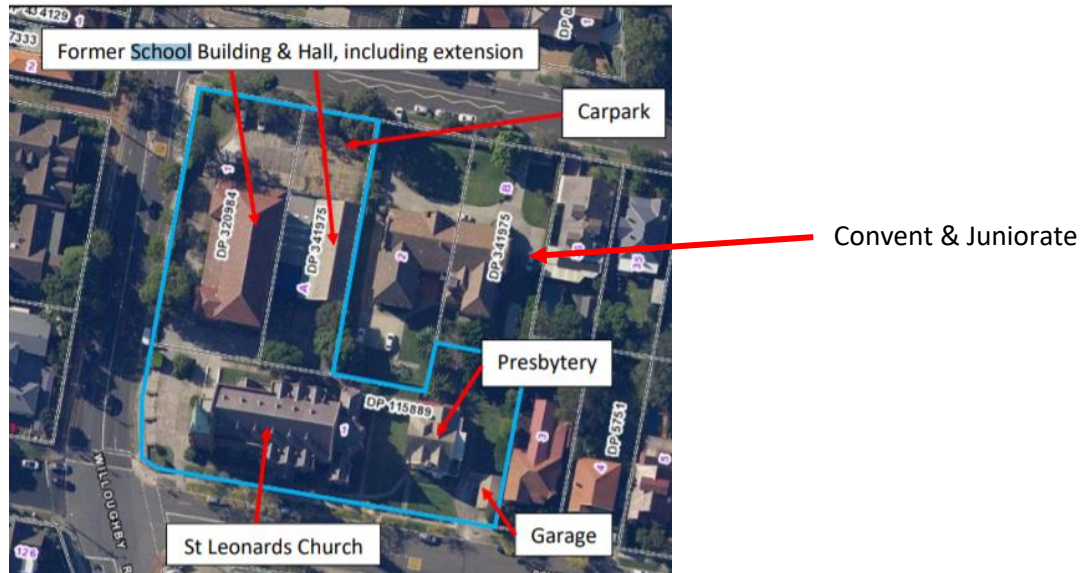
*St Leonard's Catholic School, run by the Sisters of Saint Joseph, operated from 1894 to 1996. Enrolments increased rapidly in the early days and eventually more classroom space was required. For this purpose the school acquired a new site, on the corner of Willoughby and Donnelly roads. The school maintained both the Market Street and Willoughby Road sites until 1931, when the Market Street site closed. St Leonard's Catholic School closed in 1996, also due to a steep decline in enrolments.*

Source: The Naremburn Story

# BUILDINGS

## FORMER SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The buildings proposed for demolition consists of the two-storey school building and hall plus associated extension.



*Note: The following information is sourced from the Statement of Heritage Impact submitted with Development Application 2021/340. I have **ANNOTATED IN CAPITALS BOLD**.*

### Exteriors



Figure 44. View to the Former School building, facing south-east. Note the spire of the Church.

Willoughby Road features timber doors and windows. windows and doors of the rear section of the building been altered and replaced with modern steel windows clear glass glazing Other new features include concrete and metals doors and windows". **THESE ALTERATIONS COULD RELATIVELY EASILY BE REPLACED/REMOVED.**

"The Former School Building is a two-storey exposed brick masonry building with an extensive addition that has been converted into an office and community space. The section of the school building located along Willoughby Road is a two-storey structure. The rear portion of the building is a single storey structure connected by a later addition connection. The external façade of the school building located the western boundary along



Figure 45. View to the rear of the former School building and associated extension, facing south.

along  
The  
have  
with  
steps

From this description it can be noted that **the core structure and appearance of the publicly facing exteriors are intact**. Later additions such as signage etc is easily removed to reveal the aesthetics of the building and how it complements the convent and church.

## Interiors



Figure 47. View to the interior of the Church Hall, located within the ground floor of the former School Building.

“The interiors of the school building have been altered over the years and it features later addition plasterboard ceiling with contemporary light fittings. The multipurpose hall located on the ground floor of the school building features timber flooring.<sup>38</sup> The single storey rear section of the school building has been substantial altered to accommodate the community spaces and features modern finishes with new suspended ceilings and carpeted flooring”.

It should be noted that the hall has an unusual ‘sprung floor’ chosen to soften the fall of feet during energetic activities such as dancing or gymnastics. For a multitude of reasons, **the hall holds deep memories for students with a number of “Rites of Passage” such as dances, balls, sport and religious activities undertaken.**

The former classrooms are typical of the age of construction of the building in 1931/32.

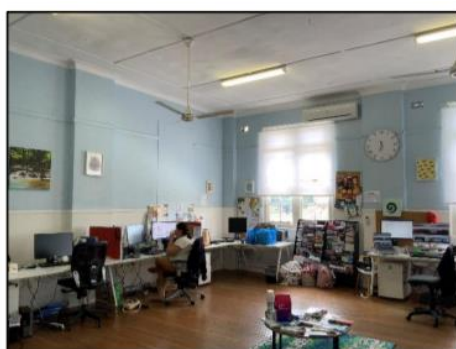


Figure 53. View to the interior of a standard first floor classroom.

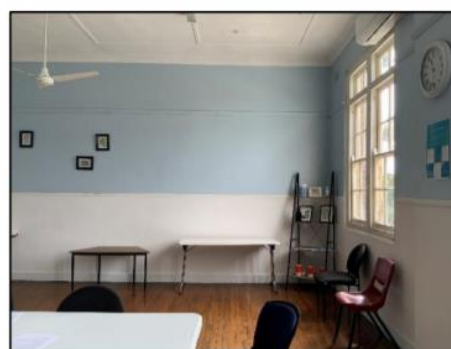


Figure 54. View to the interior of a standard first floor classroom.

## CONVENT

The prior convent in Merrenburn Ave. adjacent to the school was intrinsically associated with the school. This where the teaching nuns lived. Boarders from the school were also housed within the convent building. Both the school and convent were established by the Sisters of St Joseph on part of the former Merrenburn Estate that she had acquired. The history of the school and that of the convent are intertwined.



Former Convent

Adjacent to the school site, in Merrenburn Ave, is the former convent of the Sisters of St Joseph later opened a Juniorate within the convent to complement the Novitiate in North Sydney. The convent was also used to accommodate boarders of the school. Some of these later moved onto the North Sydney Novitiate.



After picture Willoughby

<sup>38</sup> The consultant fails to mention that the floor is an unusual ‘sprung floor’.



The cultural significance of the convent is also discussed elsewhere in relation to the purchase by the nuns of the Merrenburn Estate.

The current ownership of the former convent is unknown. The building was previously Heritage Listed. the convent itself has intrinsic heritage values which should be acknowledge by any new adjoining development. The history of the Convent assists in understanding the intrinsic cultural significance of the school buildings.

## **NEW CONVENT AT NAREMBURN.**

### **The Foundation-stone Ceremony.**

39

*In 1935 Father E. O'Brien, P.P., blessed and laid the foundation-stone of a fine new convent <sup>40</sup> which will be the future home of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This latest addition to the parochial buildings will fulfil an urgent need for the Sisters, who in past years have been obliged to reside in an old remodelled (house) close on 80 years, and which was entirely unsuitable for accommodation purposes.*

*As well as the usual conveniences for a community of 18 Sisters, provision has been made in the new convent for a music hall to serve the needs of the pupils in the adjoining school. A distinctive feature has been made of the chapel, with its barrel-vaulted roof, by carrying it through the height of both storeys. This chapel has also been equipped with a gallery at a higher level, so that any Sisters from the infirmary may hear Mass.*

*In placing the convent, a position east of the old building <sup>41</sup> has been chosen, and some further 60 feet added to the children's playing area. It is anticipated that the building will be completed about Christmas. The total cost will be £6,500. The builders were W. G. Mason, E. Green was the architect and G. Bull (W. N. Bull, Ltd.) was also involved.*

*Father O'Brien (reported) that "I was one of the first to visit. the old convent about 25 years ago <sup>42</sup>. I accompanied the late Archbishop Barry on a visit of inspection before the nuns came into residence. I thought the purchase of a building of such proportions was, at the time, a very courageous decision",*

*O'Brien continued that "**the new convent will be in harmony with the admirable group of buildings already in existence; it will be a landmark and a thing of beauty in the district**". <sup>43</sup>*

In the tradition of Archbishop Vaughan, Father O'Brien took the opportunity to introduce political aspects of education policy into his address: "Mr. Hawkins said that Sir Henry Parkes obviously

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<sup>39</sup> New Convent at Naremburn, September 1935, The Catholic Press p. 13

<sup>40</sup> New Convent at Naremburn, September 1935, The Catholic Press p. 13

<sup>41</sup> This implies that the 80 y.o. building would have been next to the school buildings before being demolished, with the new convent sitting further to the east.

<sup>42</sup> That would be c.1905. The school and new church at that time were still in Market St. The church re-located in 1913 and the school in 1932.

<sup>43</sup> Even in 1935 it was acknowledged that not only the church and presbytery were of notable significance, but also the school buildings on the site. The school buildings "plug the heritage hole" on the corner of the block should the buildings be demolished.

*realised the tremendous influence exerted by the Catholic teachers in spreading the faith in Australia, for when the unjust Education Act of 1880 was passed, he confidently forecasted that as a result the power of the priests would definitely be broken". Mr Hawkins who spoke to the appeal stated that "it was a universally accepted truth that if we closed our schools in this generation, then we began closing our churches in the next".*

It should also be considered that the nuns established a Juniorate in the convent to complement their Novitiate in Mount St, North Sydney. This relationship to St Mary McKillop raises the significance of this building to at least of state significance (if not national, or arguably, international significance).

## **CONDITION & INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDINGS**

**The school buildings are in fundamentally sound condition and capable of being adaptively re-used.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As detailed above, the former buildings of St Leonard's Catholic School, Church, Convent/Juniorate and Presbytery) have substantive cultural significance. In particular, the history of the school resonates with insight into the ethos of Catholic schooling for students, teachers and the wider community as well as the political, policy and financial pressure on catholic schools in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In response to DA 2021/340, based on documented cultural significance, it is requested that:

- approval to demolish the school buildings be withheld to allow time for their intrinsic cultural significance to be fully recognized and preserved.
- approval be granted for the buildings to be adaptively re-used (including the preservation of the 'sprung floor' in the hall) and that the Willoughby Rd façade be retained to preserve significant heritage, architectural and aesthetic linkages between St Cuthbert's and St Leonard's churches.
- given the cursory evaluation in the Consultant's Heritage Assessment Statement, an independent Heritage Assessment (funded by the proponents but with oversight by Willoughby Council) of the former school buildings be undertaken to confirm their cultural significance as established within this submission. This with a view to having key aspects of the school buildings Heritage Listed.
- the above recommended independent Heritage Assessment include the collection of any photographs and images, newspaper clippings, artefacts (including booklets) and other written information. Such items to be permanently curated and displayed within the site. Also, that the proponents commission commemorative information in print and digital formats celebrating the cultural values of the site.

# APPENDIX

## DETAILED CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

*This Appendix provides detailed information on all aspects of the cultural significance of the School.*

***The cultural significance of the buildings to be demolished has been assessed using the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter***

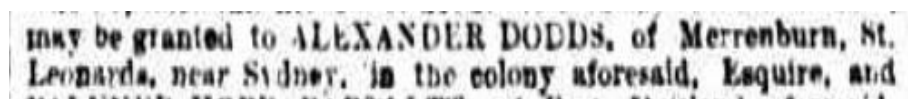
### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

#### *First school in Naremburn*

The school established by the Sisters of St Joseph was the **first school in Naremburn**. The St Leonard's Catholic School, Naremburn evolved from the Naremburn's first school of St John the Baptist.<sup>44</sup> The Josephite nuns had established St John's in Market St in 1884. When a replacement school, also in Market St, was built in 1904 it appears that the school was renamed St Leonard's Catholic School. The School moved to a site in Willoughby Rd in 1932 and retained the name St Leonard's Catholic School until its closure in 1996. From a philosophical **perspective our two/three schools are one**, figuratively part of the '*Ship of Theseus*'<sup>45</sup> that houses the spiritual and other memories of the buildings that were subsequently called St Leonard's Catholic School.

#### *Early land grant*

The Merrenburn Ave school site was built on land that was part of the Alexander Dodds Estate which was part of the **original land grant** of JS Ryan<sup>46</sup> in 1849. This portion of the Estate was generally known as **Dodds Picnic Grounds**.<sup>47</sup>



48

#### *Merrenburn Estate*



2Merrenburn Estate

<sup>44</sup> The naming convention for the Catholic school(s) in Naremburn follows that used by Fletcher J & Burnswoods, 1983 – Government Schools of NSW, NSW Department of Education p.20 for schools with multiple names. The listing is in the last name of the school with reference to earlier names.

<sup>45</sup> The Ship of Theseus is a philosophical paradox that explores the construct that even if every physical part of an entity is replaced over time the 'ship' can retain its inherent meaning.

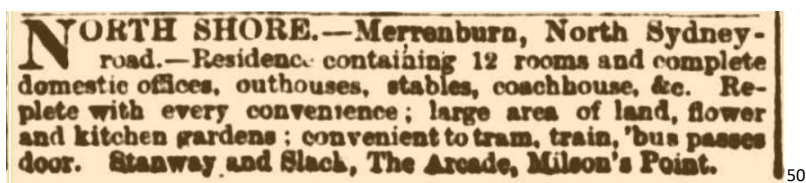
<sup>46</sup> This grant may have been to Thos. Ryan – Naremburn, 1900, Freeman's Journal, Sydney 27 October p.24

<sup>47</sup> DODDS, 1884, The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 June p.2

<sup>48</sup> This information throws light on the name of the area of the Merrenburn Estate being originally located in St LEONARDS. So, the Diocese may have selected St Leonard's of Pumice because the land was located in St Leonards.



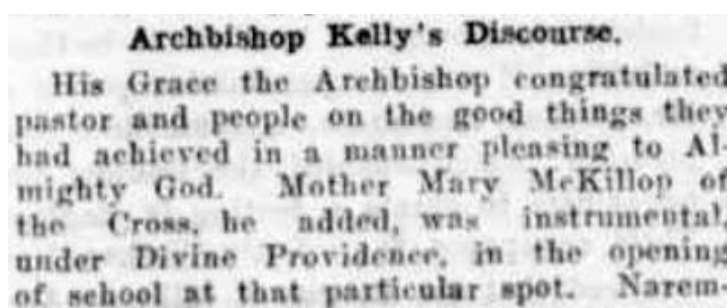
After the grant was sub-divided one part was known as the **Merrenburn Estate** <sup>49</sup> (on the corner of Merrenburn Ave, Willoughby Rd and Donnelly Rd). The house that had been built on the Merrenburn Estate was described as:



50

The house was substantial, ideally suited for a range of habitation. After the Sisters of St Joseph purchased the property it was used as a Convent and Juniorate for the Sisters. As well as providing lodgings for school boarders.

When St Leonard's Catholic School opened in Willoughby Rd, Archbishop Kelly specifically acknowledged Mother Mary McKillop's direct connection with the site.



51

### *Foundation stone*

There is a foundation stone from the church that for many years lay in the yard of the school. This stone has been restored and is currently located on the former school land.

### *Sisters of St Joseph Mother House, Mount St, North Sydney*

Mother Mary McKillop had established the nun's Novitiate in North Sydney. The **Sisters of St Joseph** purchased the Merrenburn Estate c.1912 with the purpose of opening a Juniorate in connection with their Mother House, Mount Street, North Sydney. <sup>52</sup> Due to its proximity to the Teachers' College at Mount St in North Sydney, St Leonard's Catholic School was used for many years as a Demonstration and Practice school for student teachers. <sup>53</sup>

### *Purchase of catholic school sites:*

In the case of St Leonard's catholic School, it was the Sisters of St Joseph who purchased the site for what was to be used for St Leonards Catholic School in Willoughby Rd.

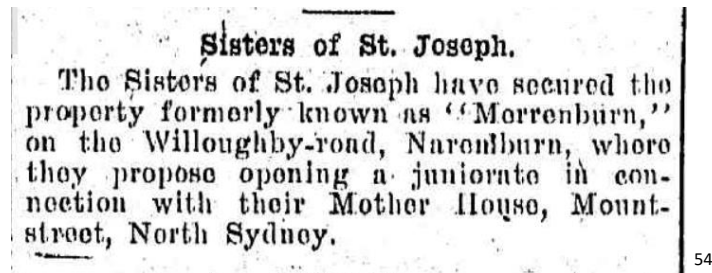
<sup>49</sup> Image after Picture Willoughby #10726 1910.

<sup>50</sup> Merrenburn, 1894, The Sydney Morning Herald, 25 August p.5

<sup>51</sup> Naremburn's New School, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 24 Nov 1932 p.19

<sup>52</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, 1912, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 25 January p.36.

<sup>53</sup> Centenary Mass booklet p.9



54

Traditionally school sites would be purchased by the local parish and used by teaching orders. In the case of St Leonard's Catholic school, the site on which it stands was purchased by the Sisters of St Joseph. This was partly related to the fact that the St Joseph Nuns were chaptered as an 'Institute' where the nuns retained a high degree of autonomy.

Government financial support for education provided by religious bodies was normal in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, with move toward secular education in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, government financial support was withheld. St Leonard's Catholic School was established just four years after the Public Instruction Act was passed in 1880. So, it very much had to stand on its own two (financial) feet. McKillop's nuns were adept at raising funds by various fundraising methods such as bazaars, fetes, and the like. The Nuns regularly ran up significant debt in establishing their schools (of the order of many thousands of dollars) worth the belief that "God will provide". Typically, God did provide with them often paying down debt over a couple of years with the support of parishioners.

The consolidation of co-located worship and educational pursuits was a response to a growing demand for services placed on smaller Catholic establishments in the district. Being associated with the heritage listed St Leonard's Catholic Church the school has local historical significance for its association with the early development of religious buildings in the area.<sup>55</sup>

### *Gender power imbalance in the Catholic Church*

The history of the establishment of St Leonard's Catholic School provides a welcome example of where a strong woman (Mary McKillop) defied and re-defined the power of the clergy. The historical significance of a woman being able to borrow money and purchase land is also palatable. Equally so that within a male dominated church such as the catholic church, the fact that McKillop was able to establish her order as an independent "Institute" where she, rather than a priest or bishop, held sway is unusual.

The gender-based imbalance of power that contributed to tensions between the Vatican and women religious is clearly evident in the fact that according to canon law all females are excluded from the sacrament of orders, which has long been a prerequisite for holding church office, that is, for exercising the power of authority in the church. Women have always exercised moral and spiritual power, but in Roman Catholicism they lack the juridical power of office. Thus, it would have been theoretically possible, although a pastoral disaster, for Roman officials to decree harsh punishments for women religious with whom they disagreed. However, this did not stop the Bishop of Adelaide from excommunication Mary McKillop).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Sisters of St Joseph, 1912, Catholic Press, Sydney January 25, p.36

<sup>55</sup> State Heritage Inventory Report, 2020, Heritage NSW p.3,4.

<sup>56</sup> Patrick, A.E, (2015) Gender imbalance in Roman Catholicism, Global Sisters Report, <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/gender-imbalance-roman-catholicism-divine-plan-or-human-construct-30751>

In defiance of catholic tradition, McKillop had established her Institute as largely autonomous from the clergy. She re-defined the role that women could take within the Catholic tradition by donating part of the land she purchased for the school to the parish to build a church and presbytery.

The acquisition, construction and operation of St Leonard's Catholic School provides some insight into gender-based power in the Australian Catholic church in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It was reported that ... "six men of vision...selected a fine site <sup>57</sup> at the corner of Willoughby and Donnelly Roads" (source?). It is further reported that "the Sisters of St Joseph purchased the land and donated a portion to the parish". The catholic church was, is (and always will be?) dominated by the male clergy. Yet in this instance, Mother Mary McKillop acted quite atypical for a woman within the church. We heard elsewhere that she directly intervened with regard to the selection (and acquisition) of the site as she wished to establish a Juniorate in the area. **The purchase of the school site by the Sisters of St Joseph was atypical of the gender-based power imbalance within the Catholic church at the times.**

## SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Framing any assessment of cultural significance when considering a school is the underlying emotions of former students (and teachers and family members), particularly in relation to a variety of 'Rites of Passage'. The memories formed during our school days stay with us forever. These memories are often 're-lived' with regular re-unions of students. The loss of a school ranks not particularly distant behind other emotional losses such as that of parents, spouse, or children. Next to family, irrespective of our religion (or not) community binds us together.

The St Leonard's School has social significance for the local community, families and friends and former students and teachers at the school. In 1994, on the Centenary of the formation of the school, the Parents & Friends Association of the School collected and published reminiscences of former students. As well as the local significance these reminiscences reflect a representative illustration of religious education in Sydney, NSW, and Australia.



*Excursion to Balmoral*

Ex-student reminiscences include: first communion; the tuckshop; school office; photo days; concerts; class sizes; a single TV; schoolyard games; choir (p.16). Housie <sup>58</sup> nights; music and dance in the hall; fashion parades; P&F <sup>59</sup> Model Mums; wine & cheese nights; International food nights; excursions; Irish dancing <sup>60</sup>; Eisteddfods; school uniform; Balls (p.17). BBQ & Fete; Chocolate Wheel; pony rides; progressive dinners; father's working bees; dances; walkathons; Catholic Youth



*Debutantes in school hall 1938*

<sup>57</sup> When the new church in Donnelly Rd was opened in 1913 there is reference that the site was secured through the kind offices of Mr. Crowley and that it was purchased by Mother Baptista of the Josephite Order. It is possible that the land was purchased from Crowley however Mother Mary McKillop was incorrectly identified as Mother Baptista – THE NEW CHURCH AT NAREMBURN 1913, The Catholic Press, Sydney 17 April p.18.

<sup>58</sup> Catholic equivalent of Bingo

<sup>59</sup> Catholic Parents & Friends – equivalent of Parents & Citizens

<sup>60</sup> Traditionally Catholic pastime

Organisation <sup>61</sup>; Ballroom, Jazz & Rock dances; sport (p.18). First day at school; playground; play lunch (P.21). Nuns and priests (p.23). School fees; medals and discipline (p.24). Long desks with inkwells; exercise books; and a “few strokes of the cane” (p.25). the nephew of De Groot; physical culture (p.27) and later, Nintendo and swimming carnivals (p.49).



*Dance, 1949*

The above recollections were provided by members of the Skilton, Leahy, Prentice, Batts, Kerrigan, McDermont, Hall (nee Burke) Campbell, McIntosh (nee Goodman and Maloney (nee Brooks) families (Centenary Booklet pp.15-36).

Many of the memories above are uniquely identifiable with a Catholic education. Many of the memories of ex-students are grounded around what become “*Rites of Passage*” associated with their school days – yearly excursions, graduation, balls, carnivals, Eisteddfods, first communion etc.

The fondness and reverence that students held for their religious teaching nuns is enshrined in the Centenary booklet (pp.11-14) where the names of the sisters who taught at the school between 1912 and 1994 are listed by year. Listed also are the names of Sisters of the school who died in NSW and elsewhere.



Downstairs  
classroom in Infants  
Building <sup>1</sup>

## *Political SIGNIFICANCE*

### *Constraining catholic schooling*

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century successive state governments of NSW implemented legislation and policies based on a secular ideology that severely constrained denominational (including Catholic) education. This was largely achieved by restricting the autonomy of non-government schools and withholding financial support to denominational schools. In response, the catholic hierarchy embarked on a vitriolic campaign of political invective often delivered from church pulpits at parish level.

It was with this background that St Leonard’s Catholic School at Naremburn was established and operated for 102 years between 1884 to 1996.

### *Education policy in NSW*

Since 1820 the colonial administration supported efforts of the major religious denominations to provide schools for the ‘coming generations’ as a way to instruct in literacy and numeracy, character and values. In 1848 a Board of National Education was established to develop and foster the development of **new state schools** offering a curriculum based on the ‘National Education’ system in Ireland. These new national schools were designed to teach students of all religions and were based

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<sup>61</sup> Social club for young Catholics

on a curriculum and values of common Christianity. This marked the beginnings of secular education in NSW.

Following the passage of the **1866 Public School Act** a Council of Education was established to oversee inspection of all schools – public and Anglican and Catholic schools associated with local parishes. This placed pressure on the autonomy of catholic education. Then in **1880** (just before the establishment of St Leonard's Catholic School in 1884), Vaughan's worse nightmare was enacted in the form of **the Public Instruction Act which** created the principles of 'free, compulsory and secular instruction in local public schools' administered by a new central Department of Education. The proclamation of the Public Instruction Act **removed all aid to church schools**. This led to several former denominational schools on the North Shore being transformed into public schools.<sup>62</sup>

In 1884, the first (catholic) school at Naremburn 'bucked the trend', was established (and persisted for the next 102 years). This achievement was largely based on the vision of Archbishop Roger Vaughan and Mother Mary McKillop.

#### State aid

Since the early 1800s the colonial administration financially supported efforts of the major religious denominations to provide schools for the 'coming generations' as a way to teach literacy, numeracy and form character and values. However, the provision of state aid (government financial assistance) to non-government (independent and religious) schools was a major source of debate in Australian political and educational policy. For nearly a century (until 1964) a policy of providing no direct state aid to non-government schools was supported by successive Australian governments at all levels.<sup>63</sup> When Australia Federated in 1901 the States retained funding responsibility for secular schooling with the Commonwealth assuming responsibility for non-government schools. The history of Catholic education in NSW marches alongside the political history of the state and the nation. Financial support from the government to Catholic and other non-government schools was a controversial issue, which most politicians preferred to deal with by disregard.

There were two main tranches of expenditure for schooling: operational (such as teacher salaries) and capital (buildings). In the case of public schools, the State government funded both salaries and building. Nil funding was provided to non-government<sup>64</sup> schools. Within the Catholic tradition, the ownership (and hence the funding responsibility (both capital and recurring) for Catholic schools can be complex and differs at different locations (parishes). Responsibility was often shared by the Parish (priests), Diocese (Cardinals and Bishops) and teaching Orders of nuns, brothers, and priests as well as parishioners and parents.<sup>65</sup>

A pivotal change occurred in 1964 when the *States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Act 1964* was passed. This Act provided grants for science laboratories and equipment in government and non-government secondary schools, marked the Australian Government's tentative entry into school funding. In 1969, the *States Grants (Secondary School Libraries) Act 1969* extended Australian Government capital assistance to finance library facilities in both government and non-government secondary schools. Capital assistance for schools was broadened in 1972 by the *States*

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<sup>62</sup> Sherrington p.5

<sup>63</sup> Wilkinson, I, 2013, State aid to non-government school, Dictionary of Educational History in Australia, and New Zealand.

<sup>64</sup> School funding: A historical and political context, Australian Government Senate Committee Hearing.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Education\\_Employment\\_and\\_Workplace\\_Relations/Completed\\_inquiries/2002-04/schoolfunding/report/03ch1](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_Employment_and_Workplace_Relations/Completed_inquiries/2002-04/schoolfunding/report/03ch1)

<sup>65</sup> Op.cit Catholic schools in NSW



*Grants (Capital Assistance) Act 1971-72* which authorised \$20 million for capital expenditure on government primary and secondary schools. This Act was amended in 1973 to include non-government schools.<sup>66</sup>

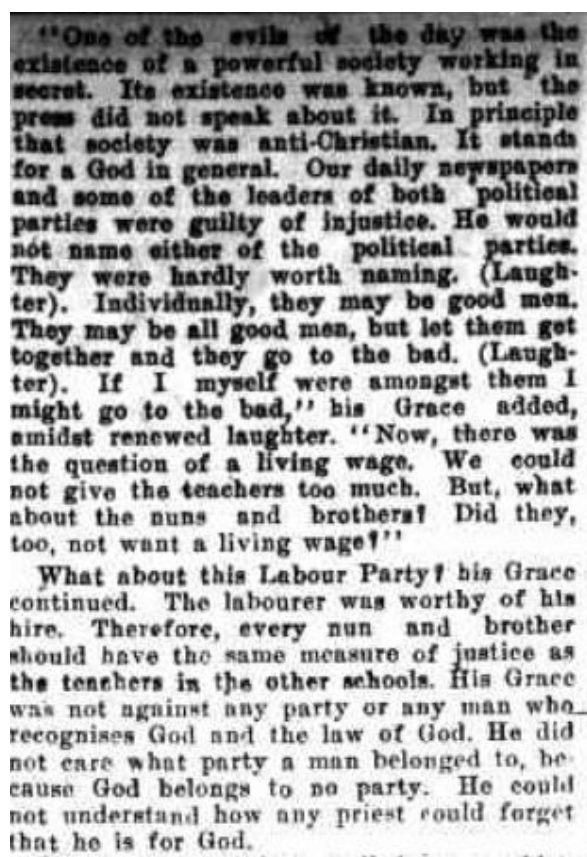
#### Catholic political re-action

In **1879** The Archbishop of Sydney, Roger Vaughan delivered a Manifesto from in which he encouraged his priests to condemn the principles of secular education from the pulpit. The condemnation was on the basis that:

*“contravening Christian religion and because such schools are **“seed plots of future immortality, infidelity, and lawlessness, being calculated to debase the standards of human excellence and to corrupt the political, social, and individual life of future citizens.”**”*<sup>67</sup> 1879

It was not then unusual for a Cardinal, Bishop, Monsignor or Parish Priest to speak out from the pulpit about the injustices of Catholic school education autonomy and funding.

On the opening of St Leonard’s Presbytery in 1919, Archbishop Barry took a highly political stance on matters of government funding and wages policy.



“One of the evils of the day was the existence of a powerful society working in secret. Its existence was known, but the press did not speak about it. In principle that society was anti-Christian. It stands for a God in general. Our daily newspapers and some of the leaders of both political parties were guilty of injustice. He would not name either of the political parties. They were hardly worth naming. (Laughter). Individually, they may be good men. They may be all good men, but let them get together and they go to the bad. (Laughter). If I myself were amongst them I might go to the bad,” his Grace added, amidst renewed laughter. “Now, there was the question of a living wage. We could not give the teachers too much. But, what about the nuns and brothers? Did they, too, not want a living wage?”

What about this Labour Party? his Grace continued. The labourer was worthy of his hire. Therefore, every nun and brother should have the same measure of justice as the teachers in the other schools. His Grace was not against any party or any man who recognises God and the law of God. He did not care what party a man belonged to, because God belongs to no party. He could not understand how any priest could forget that he is for God.

68

<sup>66</sup> Harrington, M, 2011, Early history of Australian Government funding for schools explained, Parliament of Australia.

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BN/1011/SchoolsFunding#\\_Toc284226207](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/1011/SchoolsFunding#_Toc284226207)

<sup>67</sup> Vaughan, R, 1879 Important Roman Catholic Manifesto, *Evening News* p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> New Presbytery at Naremburn, *The Catholic Press*, Sydney, 30 Oct 1919, p.18

In 1932 at the opening of the school on the Donnelly Ave site Archbishop Kelly:

His Grace spoke at some length on "the injustices inflicted on the Catholic community through the failure of Governments to grant any assistance whatever for the educational work they carried out."

69

day! The iniquitous Education Act of New South Wales distributed the public funds to only a section of the people, neglected those who stood solidly for religion, and made pets and favourites of those who were indifferent to the proper teaching of man's duties to God. The education policy of the State was also against the natural right of the parent. Education was not

70

This sentiment was picked-up Father Hurley:

This theme was enlarged upon by Father Hurley, who quoted various authorities in support of his contention that education was not of the highest standard because it was "free," secular and compulsory."

71

Ultimately, in 1964 some of the financial pressures were addressed with the introduction of State Aid.

## ASSOCIATIVE SIGNIFICANCE

In the Statement of Cultural Significance within the Statement of Heritage Impact (Heritage 21 p.39) it is stated that "*there is no known association with a particular person or group of importance within the local area or history of NSW*". **This is not correct – refer below.** Given the significance and extent of association with high profile individuals, and groups, this is a flawed omission in the statement. Leading one to conclude that the consultant saw the task merely of one of 'ticking a box'.

### *Saint Mary McKillop* <sup>72</sup>

The Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart are a religious order of women, originally founded in South Australia in 1866 by Sister (later Mother, Saint) Mary McKillop. In 1883 McKillop went to Sydney <sup>73</sup>. Dean Kenny, retired pastor of the North Sydney parish, donated his house, 'Alma Cottage', in Mount Street North Sydney, to the sisters for use as a Novitiate. By May 1884 Mary MacKillop had moved in and acquired surrounding properties, designating them as the Mother House of the Institute <sup>74</sup>. She built a substantial convent (in Mount Street, North Sydney), which still stands.

<sup>69</sup> Convent school at Naremburn, The Labor Daily, 21 November 1932 p.6

<sup>70</sup> Naremburn's New School Opened Almost Free of Debt, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 24 November 1932, p.19

<sup>71</sup> Convent school at Naremburn, The Labor Daily, 21 November 1932 p.6

<sup>72</sup> Our story, Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 2021, <https://www.sosj.org.au/our-story/saint-mary-mackillop/>

<sup>73</sup> Just before establishing the first school in Naremburn.

<sup>74</sup> The Institute was the governing Chapter of the nuns. Unlike many other Orders, the structure was centralized.

Its direct association with the Catholic St Mary of the Cross (Mother Mary McKillop) is well documented at the local level and widely known in relation to State, Australian and International recognition.

The schools in Market St from 1884 and that in Willoughby Rd from 1932 were operated by the Catholic order of nuns known as the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. Significantly when the school was opened in 1932 Archbishop Kelly outlined its **direct relationship to Mother Mary McKillop and to the growth of Catholic education in Sydney**.

### *Archbishop Roger Vaughan*<sup>75</sup>

Roger William Bede Vaughan (1834-1883), an Englishman, was the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney between 1877 – 1883. The first school (catholic) opened in Naremburn in 1884). The Irish suffragan bishops in New South Wales had failed to prevent 'the calamity' of another English appointment, and their protest to Rome was unavailing.

Vaughan revelled in public controversy. Believing the colonies, no place for 'polished frigidity' and that colonial audiences were 'a regular lot of rhinoceroses'. He consciously adapted his style but too often the result was verbosity and over-reliance on 'resonant phrases, ridicule and humour', though he was a popular preacher. He succeeded Polding as Archbishop of Sydney on 16 March 1877.



*Archbishop Roger Vaughan*

Vaughan found New South Wales Denominational education on the defensive and concluded there would be 'godless' secular education 'in the end', so Catholics must prepare to organize their own system from their own resources.

Faced with plans for state grammar schools, in April 1879 at a bishops' meeting in May left it to Vaughan to draft a joint pastoral; published in July as *Catholic Education*, it condemned schools founded on 'secularist' principles as '**seedplots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness**', and precipitated fierce sectarian conflict which **helped Parkes to abolish state aid**<sup>76</sup>. Vaughan rightly believed that the "pastoral" was the occasion not the cause of the 1880 Public Instruction Act. He issued five more pastorals in the next six months, spoke constantly in defence of Catholic rights and, enjoying 'real stand-up public fighting', provoked Parkes to brand him as 'seditious'. In 1880 Vaughan bought the *Catholic Times* and published it as the *Express* to personally 'red pepper' his opponents. In organizing an education system, he could build on the sound financial administration he had introduced, but religious teachers were essential. From 1878 he provided welcome patronage for **Mother Mary MacKillop's Sisters of St Joseph**.<sup>77</sup> In 1873-83 the number of schools and pupils more than doubled; by 1883 12,500 of Sydney's 15,200 Catholic children were in the system. The first Catholic school in Naremburn opened in 1884.

Vaughan's association with St Leonard's Catholic School derives from his close relationship with Mother Mary McKillop. Vaughan had managed to lure McKillop from Adelaide to establish schools, staffed by her nuns, in Sydney and across NSW. Unlike many religious orders that were answerable to the local parish priest, McKillop had established her order as being centrally managed via an

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<sup>75</sup> Cahill, A.E (1976) *Vaughan, Roger William Bede (1834–1883)*, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

<sup>76</sup> This referred to government aid provided to denominational school in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

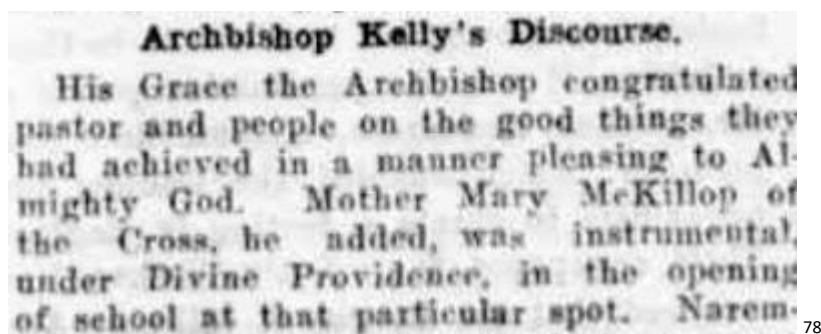
<sup>77</sup> Foakle, M.T (1986), *The Sisters of St Joseph: Their Foundation and Early History (1866-1893)* University of Adelaide



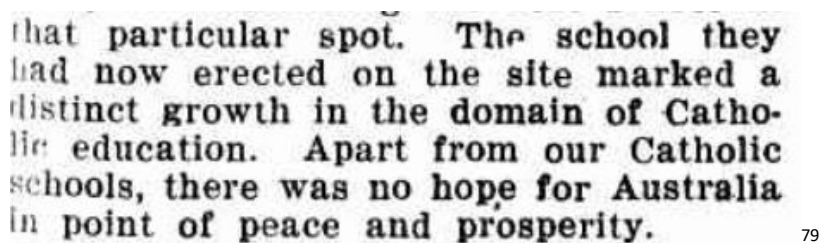
autonomous 'Institute'. This meant that the order was much more involved in raising the money to build and sustain their facilities and schools. Vaughan's polemics obviously inspired many of the clergy that later spoke at significant milestone in the history of St Leonard's.

### *Archbishop Kelly*

Kelly was the Archbishop of Sydney between 1911 and 1940. He officiated at many functions at St Leonard's. He was often outspoken politically from the pulpit (in the tradition of Archbishop Vaughan).



78



79

As detailed elsewhere in this assessment. Originally there was a convent adjoining the presbytery, church and school site. This was operated for a time as a Juniorate<sup>80</sup> for intending sisters and boarding lodgings for students at the school.

### *Cardinal Moran*<sup>81</sup>

Patrick Francis Moran was the pre-eminent Cardinal for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney between 1884 and 1911. Previously, only English Benedictine priests (Polding and Vaughan) had been appointed. Moran had been personally selected by Pope Leo XIII. During his tenure it is reported that Moran dedicated more than 5,000 churches. At his funeral in 1911 it is reported that a quarter of a million people (the largest crowd to gather in Australia until that date) witnessed his funeral procession through the centre of Sydney (*source unknown*)

**Cardinal Moran laid the foundation stone for the 1904 Church and School buildings in Market St.**

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<sup>78</sup> Naremburn's New School, The Catholic Press, Sydney, 24 Nov 1932 p.19

<sup>79</sup> Naremburn's Wonderful Effort, Catholic Freeman's Journal, Sydney, 24 Nov 1932, p.13

<sup>80</sup> In the Catholic tradition, of teaching orders persons desirous of entering the order can initially attend a Juniorate to complete their school prior to moving on to the Novitiate as Postulants where they take their "Vows". Mary McKillop had established the Novitiate in North Sydney. The St Leonard's site provided Juniorate facilities.

<sup>81</sup> Cahill A.E, Moran, Patrick Francis (1830-1911), Australian Dictionary of Biography

### Henry Lawson

In March 1917, Lawson wrote from Leeton to George Robertson of Angus & Robertson who was preparing a selection of his verse for publication: *"Above Crow's Nest" was written in '06-'07 in an unusual little cottage in a little paddock of its own in Market Street, Naremburn, belonging to a Mrs M 'Gill; and just at the head of a deep rocky gully running into Middle Harbour. A Catholic school is opposite.*"<sup>82</sup>

Wilksch identifies 58 Market St as being the property Lawson was referring to.



83

### Bishop Ingham

Peter William Ingham (born 19 January 1941 at Crows Nest, Sydney) is an Australian bishop. He was the fourth Roman Catholic bishop of the Diocese of Wollongong, serving since 2001. **Ingham's early education was completed at St Leonard's Primary School, Naremburn, and St Pius X College, Chatswood.** (various sources).

### Francis De Groot

It is reported that a **nephew of De Groot attended the school**. Francis Edward de Groot (24 October 1888 – 1 April 1969) was a member of the fascist, paramilitary organisation, the New Guard of Australia, who was most famous for intervening on horseback during the official opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932, cutting the tape before the Premier of New South Wales, Jack Lang, could do so (various sources)

### Mrs. T.J. Dalton (nee Nugent)

Mrs. T.J. Dalton (nee Nugent) was a **former student of St Leonard's Catholic School, Naremburn**. She was always a foremost figure in the Catholic community. She was a great benefactress and Philanthropist. For her exemplary life and beneficent deeds, she received the title of Dame of the Holy Sepulchre from the Pope, an honour rarely conferred, there only being three other holders of the title in the world. Requiem Masses were celebrated at St Leonard's Catholic Church in Naremburn and the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Suva where she died.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> From Henry Lawson, Letters 1890-1922, Colin Roderick (ed.), Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1970.) quoted in Wilksch, E 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby Council p.55

<sup>83</sup> Wilksch, E. 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby City Council, Chatswood

<sup>84</sup> Mrs. Dalton's Death, 1918, Sunday Times, Sydney, December 18, p.3

order are also known as Dames. Mrs Dalton was the daughter of the late Mr and Mrs. Philip Nugent, of Tipperary. She was the president of the St. Mary's branch of the Red Cross Society (Ridge street, North Sydney), and her name and her many activities, as well as her philanthropic spirit, were closely linked with many other institutions. During

85

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86

## AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The scale and location of the former school buildings complement the aesthetics of the heritage listed St Leonard's Church, presbytery, and convent. Together they clearly present the religious focus of the site at a local level. The buildings also complement other heritage listed public building in the immediate area including the former Naremburn Public School and St Cuthbert's Anglican church. The scale and location of the former school buildings complement the aesthetics of the heritage listed St Leonard's Church and the presbytery and convent. Together they clearly present the religious focus of the site at a local level. The buildings also complement other heritage listed public buildings in the immediate area including the former Naremburn Public School and St Cuthbert's Anglican church. The former school buildings provide an architectural connection between St Leonard's and St Cuthbert's Churches.

In particular, the streetscape along the Willoughby Rd frontage of the site is intact.



*St Cuthbert's Church - St Leonard's School - St Leonards Church*

The integrity of this streetscape will be lost if the school buildings are demolished.

<sup>85</sup> Obituary. (1918, *The Southern Mail* December 3, p.2.

<sup>86</sup> Mrs. Dalton's Death, 1918, Sunday Times, Sydney, December 18, p.3

## SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

This is a crucial aspect of cultural significance of the school building that was not canvassed in the Consultant's Heritage Review.<sup>87</sup>

A key and underlying construct in relation to a catholic school are matters of spirituality. For former students (and teachers and family members) there are a variety of “**Religious Rites of Passage.**”



*First Communion Day 1935*

A range of other particularly Catholic ‘Rites’ include Ex-student spiritual reminiscences include: first communion; Catholic Youth Organisation<sup>88</sup>; Nuns and priests (p.23; Confirmation; sex education; religious classes; visits from Missionary priests; weekly confession; Mass attendances; Saints days.

In addition, the site has a deeper spiritual significance associated with the **ethos of Catholic schooling.**

St Leonard's was a catholic school. As such there are a variety of religious ritual associated with its operations. This was particularly so given that its hall was also used by the church for associated religious celebration. Significant events included First Communion breakfasts, confirmation sacraments. Additionally, as a school students developed deep, and meaningful memories associated with their schooling and schoolmate. ‘Rites of passage’ included class reunions, balls, and fundraising events such as fetes.

## TECHNICAL SIGNIFICANCE

### *Sprung hall floor*

An unusual aspect of the hall was the provision of a sprung floor to provide shock absorption during energetic activities, thus providing less physical impact on participants.

The hall is part of the new school building, and will be used for all social events promoted by the parish. It is provided with a spring floor, and, as it is the largest of its type in the district, will, no doubt, be much sought after for dances.

89

<sup>87</sup> After Picture Willoughby #1153, 1978

<sup>88</sup> Social club for young Catholics

<sup>89</sup> Naremburn Ball – First in New Hall, The Labor Daily, Sydney, 19 Sep 1932, p.7

six months. The building is of brick, handsome and solid, and a valuable contribution to the municipality. It stands two stories high, with class-rooms, corridor, assembly hall, well lighted and ventilated. The lower section forms an artistic and useful parish hall. The floor rests on springs, and there are kitchen, cloak-rooms and ticket offices, supplying a long felt necessity. The parishioners<sup>90</sup>

When built, this was the largest hall of its type in the district and hosted events such as balls, dances and plays. Whilst not unknown, the sprung floor of the hall reflects the focus that a church hall formed within a religious precinct.

### *Re-cycling of materials*

The 1904 and 1932 school buildings were constructed using materials from the former school sites in Market St.

long. ' Most of the material used in the construction was recycled from the Market St building: this included 39,000 bricks, timber, roofing, slates, glass etc, all in first class condition. Plans and specifications had been

Approval was granted in 1936 to build three additional classrooms to cater for the rapid increase in the number of children. The remaining usable materials from the church school in Market St were used for the new rooms as a buyer for them could not be

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<sup>90</sup> New School-Hall at Naremburn, Catholic Freeman's Journal, Sydney 17 Nov 1932 p.2



obtained. The stone foundations also found a place. The foundations for the new rooms were planned to carry two stories, should they be needed in the future. By recycling the Market St materials, it was hoped that the building would be completed free of debt. the plans and specifications were obtained free of cost from a local builder "who was one of our people". The remaining usable materials from the old site in Market Street, which they had not been able to sell, were used in the construction of these classrooms, which are now used as infant classrooms and, since 1993, school library.

91

For the construction of school buildings at the earlier Market St site, the congregation had considered innovative ways to construct and pay for the school by manufacturing American-style pressed bricks using locally sourced material.

A preliminary meeting has been held to form a company for manufacturing bricks on the American principle from sandstone and lime. Hills of sandstone of the character and composition required exist at Naremburn. Experts declare that the pressed bricks of the proposed company will revolutionize the trade.

92

It is not reported whether this enterprise got off the ground.

## REPRESENTATIVENESS

### *Complex consolidated facilities*

Unlike a typical secular school site (such the former Naremburn Public School opposite) the St Leonard's Catholic School site in Willoughby Rd is representative of many Catholic facilities in NSW where a full range of services are co-located. Over the years, on adjacent sites, there has been a church, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, priests' presbytery, nuns' convent and Juniorate and school boarders' facilities.

Different elements of Catholic consolidated sites were often owned and operated by different entities within the Catholic Church<sup>93</sup>. Related entities include the Diocese (regional organization managing multiple Parishes. Parish priests who provided religious and social support to their parishioners. Teaching orders of nuns (such as the Sisters of St Joseph) or brothers (such as the Christian Brothers; Marist Brother etc.). There could also be teaching orders of priests (such as Jesuits).

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<sup>91</sup> Centenary Booklet p.9

<sup>92</sup> Naremburn, Freeman's Journal, Sydney, 21 October 1905 p.29

<sup>93</sup> As has been exposed with Commissions into sexual abuse at Catholic churches, schools, and Presbytery, often the ownership of Church land and facilities was often vested in entities without a direct relation to the religious persons who used them.

Typically, the Church and priests' Presbytery was owned by the Diocese/Parish. School and boarding buildings either by the Diocese/Parish or religious teaching order. A Convent (or equivalent) by orders of Nuns or Brothers.

The Catholic co-located consolidated sites contrast starkly with the footprint and uses of the former secular Naremburn Public School site, itself representative of a typical state school. In New South Wales, was common to find the co-location of Catholic facilities.

## RARITY

### *Heritage listed school buildings*

**Over ninety (90) school sites** have been identified across the Willoughby Council area since 1860. **A mere seven (7) of those sites have buildings that have been Heritage Listed**<sup>94</sup> under the current Willoughby Local Environmental Plan (LEP). Of the seven listings, **five (5) related to government schools** with one independent school (Glenaeon) and **a single school hall at the single Catholic St Phillip Neri School.**

**No Catholic School Buildings as extant at St Leonard's Catholic School in Naremburn have been Heritage Listed.**

Catholic school buildings are blatantly under-represented in the Heritage LEP. Acknowledging the cultural significance of the St Leonard's Catholic School buildings would go a long way to redress recognition of artefacts of the Catholic culture of a sizeable proportion of the citizens of Willoughby since it was Incorporated in 1865.

**There is sufficient evidence that the school buildings should appropriately acknowledged as being of significant local, state, national (and arguably) international cultural significance for a variety of communities.**

### *Moveable artefact - Foundation stone*

A foundation stone dating to 1904 is believed to be located withing the current school site.

A new school/church was built in 1904. The foundation stone had been laid by His Eminence Cardinal Moran, and the building opened by him on the 4th of December 1904. The inscription on the stone is 'This stone was blessed and laid by his Eminence Cardinal Moran, 21st February 1904'. This stone was ultimately brought to the present church site in the school playground where years of feet climbing over it obliterated much of the pertinent inscription and it appeared generally regarded as an unrevered mystery stone. It is now restored and placed in an appropriate position as a permanent reminder of the early days of Catholic education in Naremburn.

95

<sup>94</sup> Chatswood Public School, Glenaeon, Naremburn Public School, St Phillip Neri School, Northbridge Public School, Willoughby Girls High School and Willoughby Public Schools.

<sup>95</sup> Centenary booklet p.8

The significance of the foundation stone has previously been acknowledged and its retention on church owned land (with appropriate historical interpretation) should be safeguarded as a Condition of Consent.

### *Why St Leonard's for a school in Naremburn?*

Naremburn and St Leonards are adjacent suburbs within present-day Willoughby City Council. St Leonard's Catholic Church and School are located toward the centre of Naremburn, some distance from the suburb of St Leonard's. Originally, St Leonard's applied to the whole area from the present suburb of North Sydney to Gore Hill. The township of St Leonard's in 1883 is now North Sydney.



*Willoughby Council area post 1895*

*"As the 1800s were reached, rapid changes were taking place in the locality known until then as Central Township. The district name of Naremburn was being adopted for the settlement which was progressively being enlarged. The nearest public schools were at North Sydney, one and a half miles distant, and at North St Leonards, one mile away."*<sup>96</sup>

The proposed St Leonard's Catholic Church<sup>97</sup> was given the patronage of **St Leonard of Port Maurice**.<sup>98</sup> It is unknown if the church hierarchy at the time were confused about the location of their buildings or a belief of the then extent of the area of St Leonards. Either way, the legacy is an assumed anomaly between the name of the church and the suburb in which it is located for those who have not heard of St Leonard of Port Maurice.

<sup>96</sup> Wilksch, E, 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby Municipal Council. p. 127

<sup>97</sup> Wilksch, E, 1988, The Naremburn Story, Willoughby Municipal Council. p. 123

<sup>98</sup> Paul Jerome Casanova was born in 1676 in Porto Maurizio, Italy. In 1697, he joined the Franciscans of the Strict Observance and took the name Brother Leonard. Casanova was ordained in Rome in 1703. He was later canonised in the Catholic tradition.