

HERITAGE PLACE

NAME OF PLACE: FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ADDRESS/LOCATION OF PLACE: Monroe Street Best Street BRANXHOLME

STUDY NUMBER: 215

HERITAGE OVERLAY NUMBER:

PRECINCT: Branxholme

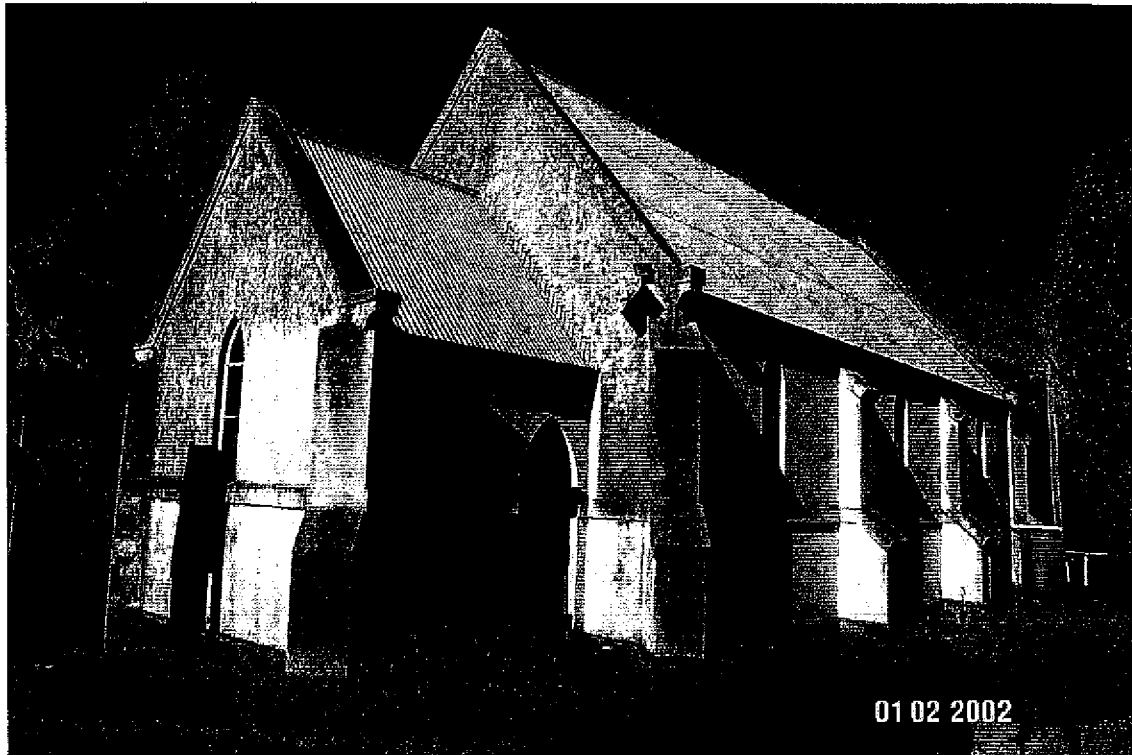
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA: Southern Grampians Shire

ALLOTMENT: 4 **SECTION:** 11 **PARISH:** PARISH OF BRANXHOLME

ACCESS DESCRIPTION:

CFA 473J B-12; VicRoads 233 S3; located on the west side of Monroe Street, 80m north of the intersection with Brown Street, in the centre of the township of Branxholme

SIGNIFICANCE RATING: State



Free Presbyterian Church, Monroe Street, Branxholme.

Image Date: 31/01/02

EXTENT OF LISTING:

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

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

A small and very simple rendered brick church in the Gothic Revival style, of three bays divided by buttresses, angled at the corners, and with single windows. The Church is sited to face eastwards across the valley of the Arrandoovong Creek. The walls are subdivided horizontally by a continuous moulding at the height of the window sills. The facade has a double-leaved, ledge and brace door within a lancet opening. Above this there is a small lancet opening with timber louvres. The roof which is pitched at 60 degrees is corrugated. The interior is equally austere, with no adornment, with the plainest of furniture and with no facilities for music, reflecting the strict Calvinist values of the Free Presbyterians as a denomination.

HISTORY:

The original Free Presbyterian Church is said to have been the present Uniting Church. After a disagreement about the playing of music during services, a part of the congregation broke away to form a new Free Presbyterian congregation and to build a new church. The foundation stone was laid on 17th December 1878 and the church was opened on 30th March, 1879. The building contractors were Foster Bros. Of Branxholme and the cost was 445 pounds. The Minister at the time was the rev William McDonald of Hamilton. Most of the ministers have lived in Hamilton but, in 1910, the Rev J D Ramsey was living near the church in Branxholme.

The Free Presbyterian Church was the third to be built in Branxholme, after the Presbyterian and Primitive Methodist churches. According to Agnes Walter in 'Branxholme, 1843-1973', "The foundation stone was laid on 17th December 1878 and the church was opened on 30th March 1879. The name of an architect has not yet been linked to the design of the church. The building contractors were Foster Bros. of Branxholme, the cost was 445 pounds and the Church in Monroe Street is of locally-made bricks." Isaac Foster and his sons were stonemasons and Foster Brothers were also the town's undertakers. Walter continues, "The minister at the time it was built was the Rev. William McDonald, of Hamilton. Most of the ministers have lived in Hamilton, but, in 1910, J D Ramsey was living near the church in Branxholme. The elders in 1879 were Malcolm Murchison, John McDonald, and Hugh McInnes; the deacons were John McLean, Angus McDonald, and Donald McLean; and the trustees were John McLean, Hugh McLean, and Angus McDonald.

The Free Presbyterians were one of three early branches of Presbyterianism in colonial Victoria. The Free Church of Scotland split from the Established Church of Scotland in 1846 over perceived encroachments of the state on the church. James Forbes, the deposed minister of Scots Church, Melbourne had formed the Free Church of Australia Felix by 1848. The Presbyterian Synod of Australia continued its connection with the Church of Scotland. The third branch was the United Presbyterian Church formed in Scotland in 1847, which opposed any state interference. Further subdivisions occurred but, when the relationship between church and state had been largely resolved in Victoria by the late 1850s, their differences largely melted and a limited union was negotiated in 1859. But, as Walter Phillips states in 'Victorian Churches', "The Free Church Minority continued separate and in 1913 joined other Free Presbyterians to form the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia." There is also a Free Presbyterian Church in Brown Street, Hamilton.

THEMATIC CONTEXT:

Theme 8 Developing Australia's cultural life
8.6 Worshipping
8.6.1 Worshipping together
8.6.3 Founding Australian religious institutions
8.6.4 Making places for worship

CONDITION:

The building is in fair condition. (The interior has not been inspected.)

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INTEGRITY:

Excellent degree of integrity.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

What is significant?

The original Free Presbyterian Church is said to have been the present Uniting Church, nearby in Monroe Street. After a disagreement about the playing of music during services, a small part of the congregation broke away to form a new Free Presbyterian congregation and to build a new church. Services were conducted in Scottish Gaelic, the native tongue of many of the congregation and without any music. The foundation stone was laid on 17th December 1878 and the church was opened on 30th March, 1879. Although the architect for the building is not known, the contractors were Foster Brothers of Branhholme and the cost was 445 pounds. It is one of the few remaining Free Presbyterian Churches in Victoria including that at Hamilton, whose interior has been stripped, making this one of the very few whose distinctively austere interiors survive intact. There is no adornment and the furniture is plain, reflecting the strict Calvinist values of the denomination. The Minister at the time of the break was the Rev William McDonald of Hamilton. Most of the ministers have lived in Hamilton but, in 1910, the Rev J D Ramsey was living near the church in Branhholme. The church retains a high degree of integrity and is in fair condition.

How is it significant?

The Free Presbyterian Church is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria, the Southern Grampians Shire and the township of Branhholme.

Why is it significant?

The Free Presbyterian Church is of historical significance as a rare example of a minor branch of the Presbyterian denomination. It is of architectural significance as a very rare example of a Free Presbyterian Church with an intact interior, for its use of the Gothic revival style, which is all the more notable because before the 1860s the Presbyterians tended to eschew the Gothic style.

COMPARISON:

020 St Andrews Uniting Church, Winter Street, Coleraine
098 Uniting Church, Martin Street, Peshurst
159 St Andrews Uniting Church, Coleraine-Balmoral Road, Balmoral
214 St Andrew's Uniting Church (former Presbyterian Church), Monroe Street, Branhholme
Free Presbyterian Church, Brown Street, Hamilton
Free Presbyterian Church, Chapel Street, East St Kilda

ASSESSED BY: tfh

ASSESSMENT DATE: 28/03/2002

EXISTING LISTINGS:

HERITAGE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Include in VHR Include in RNE Include in Local Planning Scheme

No Recommendations for Inclusions

REFERENCES:

Author	Title	Year	Page
Agnes V. Walter	Branholme 1843-1973	1973	19
Walter Phillips, in Miles Lewis, ed.	Victorian Churches	1991	9-10