

ST DOMINICS PRIORY, CHAPEL (AND PART CHAPTER HOUSE)

127-129 Molesworth Street

St Dominics is unusual as it is a church founded largely by and for women, the Dominican nuns who arrived from Britain in 1883 (as a separate order from the order at Franklin Street and Cabra Convent).



(CD Ref 1346/16)

Inspiration for the founding of this order in South Australia came from Isabelle and Elizabeth Baker, mother and sister of Sir Richard Chaffey Baker. Baptised as an Anglican, Elizabeth converted to Catholicism while on a visit to Europe with her mother. After being received into the Catholic Church in Paris by a Dominican they travelled to Stone in Staffordshire, England, to visit a small hospital for incurables run by an order of Dominican nuns. Mother and daughter were so enthused that they returned to set up their own hospital in Strangways Terrace, North Adelaide. At the invitation of Bishop Reynolds, six professional sisters and two postulants came to Adelaide from Stone in 1883 to operate the hospital. Unfortunately because of the conditions of the Dominican Sisters' rule they were allowed to nurse only female patients, while the government ruling of the day required that a hospital admit both female and male patients. Although nursing was their reason for emigration the sisters turned to education instead by opening up a school. A community of nursing sisters eventually travelled from Sydney from the Little Company of Mary to operate the Bakers' hospital in 1900 and bought it soon after. This is now Calvary Hospital.

The Dominican Sisters had by this time followed their ' . . . deference for their contemplative way of life' and had built a chapel and priory for themselves which were opened in 1893. The *Observer*, 29 July 1893 provided a description even more elaborate than usual:



(CD Ref 1347/7)

The new buildings included the choir and outer choir, sanctuary, and side chapels, the Lady Chapel and St Dominics. On the west side were cloisters, base of the bell turrets and temporary Sacristy; and on the east the tribune, entrance porch sacristy and confessional. The bell turret was carried up square then reduced to an octagon and finished by a stone spire.



(CD Ref 1347/12)

The walls were of hard bricks faced with Tea Tree Gully freestone. The dressings were executed in Murray Bridge freestone and roofs covered with blue slate and filled in with narrow diagonal boarding. Internally several alterations had been made from the original plans, including a screen wall between the choir and outer choir, ' . . . much improved by the insertion of traceried windows in stone, and a much larger and handsomer doorway'. The sanctuary floor was laid with Minton tiles from Europe. Stained-glass in the large sanctuary window was from Hardmans', of Birmingham, and represented the Adoration of the Lord in the centre:

. . . while the rest of the space is literally filled by angels and saints offering homage to the Redeemer. The three windows in the Lady Chapel are of stained glass, by Messrs. Montgomery and Grimbley of Melbourne and Adelaide, and are considered to be very superior specimens of this class of work. The window at the back of the Lady Altar represents the Annunciation (the offering of Dean Kennedy and Diocesan priests); the two small side windows have single figures - one St. Rose of Lima, the other St. Catherine, the gifts of Mr. Woods and Mr. Leahy.

The most important fitting was the high altar, the gift of Aloysius MacDonald.

The altar and reredos are almost entirely executed in Caen stone from the designs of Mr. Hansom, architect of so many fine monastic and ecclesiastical buildings in England, and measures about 13 feet wide by over 17 feet high. The style of the work generally is late 'Decorated', with somewhat earlier treatment in the carving. The altarstone is supported by rich diapered work surrounding an arched recess, within which is a sculptured stone representation of the Last Supper. In the centre above the table is the stone case for the

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

Tabernacle, while on either side are two tiers of marble shelves stepping backwards to the reredos, which is the richest portion of the work. Still higher in the centre is a beautiful pierced canopy, forming, with its open pinnacled roof, a graceful termination to the other work. Beneath this is placed the crucifix. Above the marble shelves on each side are traceried arcades, deeply recessed, and filled underneath with sculpture. On one side the marriage of Cana is represented; on the other the parable of the loaves and fishes. Above is a traceried semi-groined canopy, entirely filled in with intricate flowing tracery, and finished on top with a cornice and carved cresting. It is difficult to convey a correct idea of this beautiful work by a mere description. It is without a doubt one of the most elegant and appropriate designs ever carried out in the Australian Colonies. It was executed by Mr Bolton, of Cheltenham, England.

The Church of the Perpetual Adoration, the full title of the building, has been described by David Dolan ' . . . as that anachronistic minor masterpiece'. The Mother Prioress required a replica of the chapel of the order at Stone which had been designed by that devotee of Catholicism and noted architectural polemicist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin. She asked a Melbourne architect Tappin to draw up plans for an



(CD Ref 1347/10)

identical building to be erected for the order in Adelaide.

The chapel was erected by J.J. Leahy under the superintendence of E.J. Woods architect. The building is described as a faithful replica of a Pugin chapel, erected forty years after his death. Architecturally this use of Pugin design characteristics is important, as are the actual features of the church, including the use made of contrasting ashlar and rock faced masonry. The interior is finely detailed, the internal space joinery reredos, altar, ironwork and encaustic tile flooring combining to produce a magnificent interior of high integrity.

Dolan D., 'Gothic revival architecture of South Australia' in *South Australiana*, Vol. 13. No. 1, March 1974, pp. 3-33; *Observer*, 29 July 1893; Press, M., *From our broken toil*, 1986, pp. 216-8; Woods Bagot, *Ledger of Commissions*.

The text in this Information Sheet was copied from the **Heritage of the City of Adelaide: An Illustrated Guide**, (1996). The photographs contained in this Information Sheet are a selection of those held by Heritage Services, in digital format.

The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

The heritage related Principles of Development Control as well as the Precinct specific objectives and Principles of Development Control are contained in the Adelaide (City) Development Plan. These should be referred to in whole when contemplating any development.

Further information on the Heritage Incentives Scheme, an initiative of Council to sponsor timely and appropriate conservation action is available upon request of the Customer Service Centre.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY PART CHAPTER HOUSE	Building No 25/0105-3
Address	Rear 127-129 Molesworth Street, North Adelaide (Known as 119)	CT 522/197

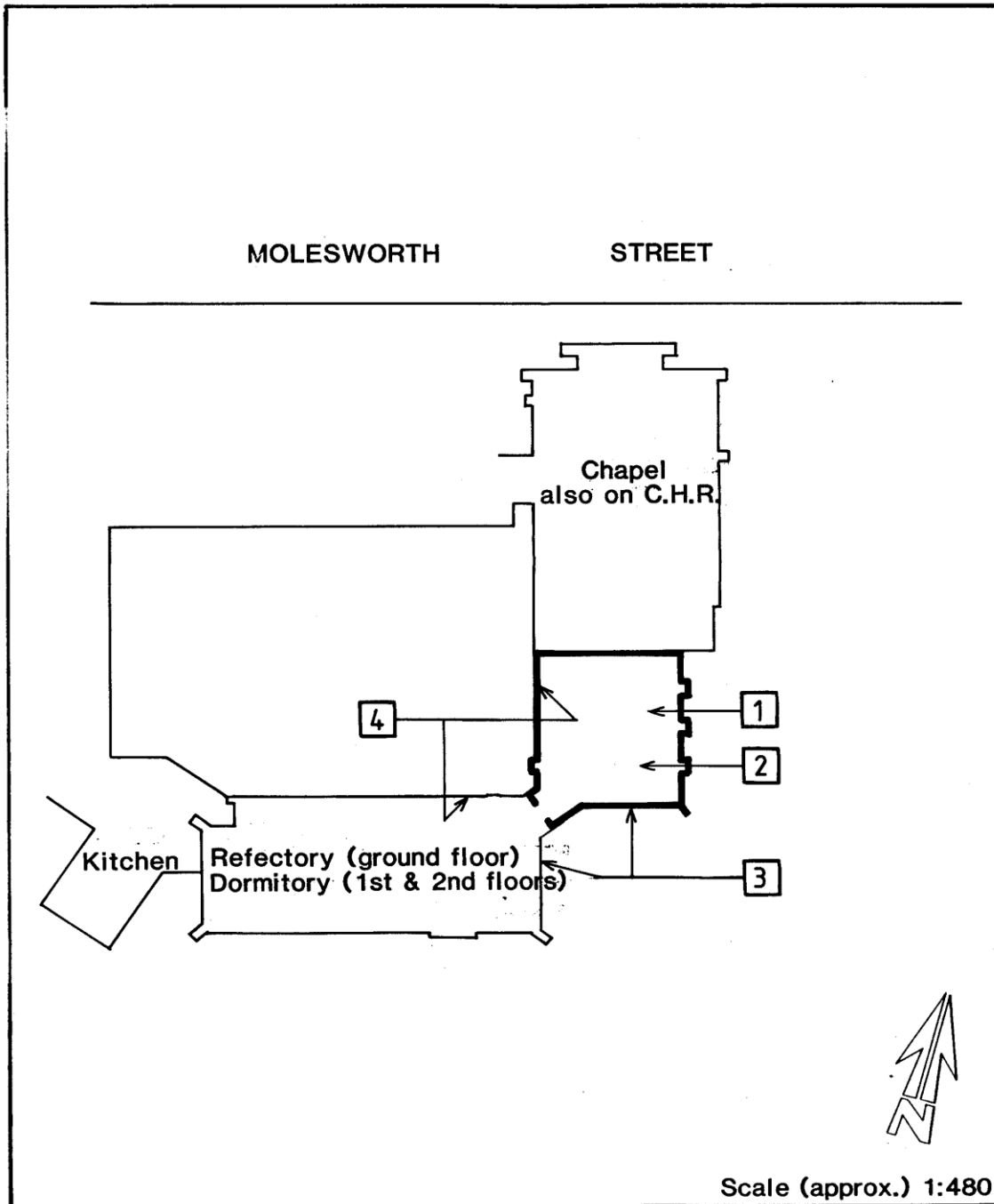


Image scanned - not to stated scale.

This Curtilage Map has been prepared as a guide only and no warranty or assurance is given about the accuracy of the content as it may contain obsolete information. The Corporation excludes all liability [including for negligence] in relation to your use of these documents.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register - Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY PART CHAPTER HOUSE	Building No
Address	Rear 127-129 Molesworth Street, North Adelaide (Known as 119)	25/0105-3 CT 522/197

NOTES:

1. Chapter Room (ground floor).
Dormitory (first and second floor).
2. Steeply pitched slate roof. Note dormer windows.
3. Hipped gable with supporting timber joinery.
4. Note rendered wall surfaces to cloister.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register - Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY CHAPEL	Building No	25/0105-2
Address	127-129 Molesworth Street, North Adelaide (known as 119 Molesworth Street)	CT	522/197

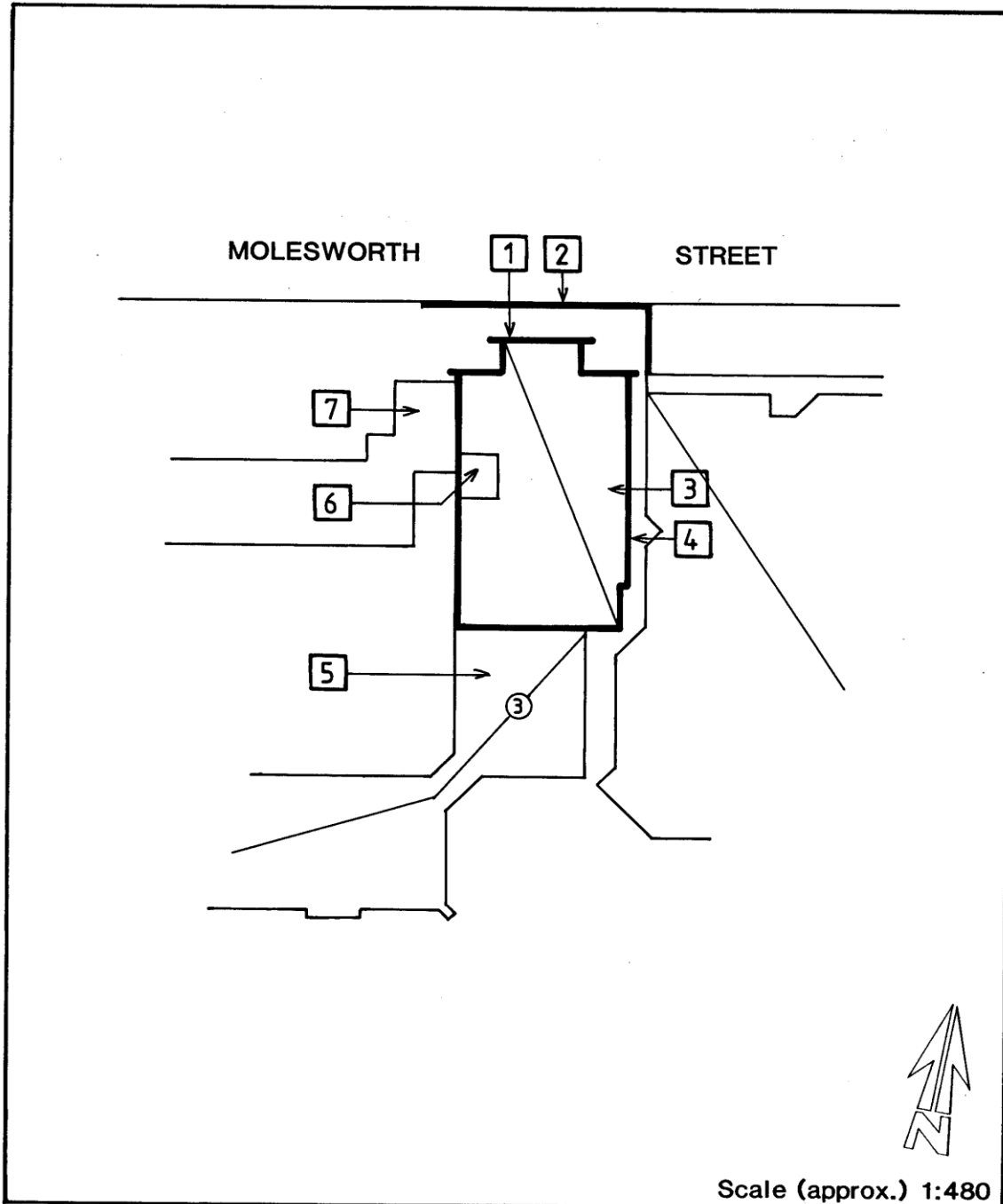


Image scanned - not to stated scale.

This Curtilage Map has been prepared as a guide only and no warranty or assurance is given about the accuracy of the content as it may contain obsolete information. The Corporation excludes all liability [including for negligence] in relation to your use of these documents.



CITY OF ADELAIDE HERITAGE STUDY

The City Heritage Register - Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY CHAPEL	Building No 25/0105-2 CT 522/197
Address	127-129 Molesworth Street, North Adelaide (known as 119 Molesworth Street)	

NOTES:

1. Note leadlight and tracery.
2. Cast iron and rendered masonry fence.
3. Slate shingle roof and metal cresting.
4. Coursed random rock faced sandstone with stucco enrichment.
5. Note Priory also listed.
6. Note Spire of sandstone ashlar construction.
7. Sandstone and concrete block addition.