

CONVENT OF MERCY

32-46 Angas Street

This range of buildings incorporates two residences built in 1867-68 and 1870-71. The complex did not reach its present form until 1922 with the completion of the frontage to Angas Street.

The complex is of considerable architectural and historical importance. It is historically important primarily because of the association with the Roman Catholic Order of the Sisters of Mercy. In 1856 members of this order left Dublin for Buenos Aires, establishing themselves in South America. Following religious persecution the entire community left Argentina for Adelaide in 1880. In June 1880 the community purchased a house which had been occupied since 1877 by George Dutton Green. The purchasers on behalf of the order were Christina Fitzpatrick, Julia Murphy and Anne Kenney. In 1898 the property was vested in the Convent of Mercy Adelaide Inc. which purchased the properties further east in 1920.

The house and land purchased in 1880 was the western-most part of the present property. The house was described as a 'very handsome villa residence'. It was built by Charles Farr on land owned by Farr and Bullock for Mrs Anthony Forster to a design by Wright, Woods and Hamilton in 1870-71. The house was so architecturally significant that it warranted description in the *South Australian Register* of 3 January 1871. There were about ten large rooms, beside bathrooms and store closets, side and front entrances, and a spacious hall with a staircase to the upper floor:

The doorway is very handsome, enriched by an arch and other ornamental work in cement and freestone. The eastern end of the front projects a few feet, and has two very handsome bay windows in the centre. The side front, facing east is likewise finished in superior style, the entrance being through a double-arched doorway, surmounted by an artistically-designed balcony connecting with the upper rooms.

The residence was of Dry Creek stone with cement and freestone dressings. Additions and alterations were carried out for the Sisters of Mercy in 1882. In 1889 Edward John Woods designed a wing facing Angas Street with a community room and living cells on the upper storey. Attached to this was an arcade which formed two sides of a court.

Mother Mary Clare, one of the original company from Argentina, had aimed to extend the convent eastwards and to complete the cloister. With the purchase of additional property to the east in 1920, together with funds provided by a substantial inheritance of Mother Mary Cecilia, plans were prepared by Walter Hervey Bagot for the incorporation of a house on the east and to unify the whole in external appearance. The cloister court and the facade to Angas Street were completed in symmetrical form, reflecting the detailing of the original Wright, Woods and Hamilton designed residence. The house which was subsumed by this building work had been erected by Brown and Thompson for £1350 in 1867-68 for Alexander Cunningham.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

The most important part of this expansion was the Cunningham Memorial Chapel built to commemorate the parents of the Reverend Mother Mary Cecilia. The *Advertiser*, 22 November 1922 emphasised the importance of this building with an extensive description. The chapel's external treatment conformed to the design of the old building, its principal features being a slender belltower and an apse with organ and stairs to the choir gallery. Within, it was divided into sanctuary, nave and transept with stalls of English oak for the sisters and the transept reserved for the scholars. The altars were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph. The high altar is:

... executed in pure white Carrara marble, with columns of dark green veined Polcevera and pale green french marble, and panels of warm African and pale rose Sienna marble. The gilt bronze doors of the Ciborium are flanked with little shafts of rare African red onyx.

At the front of the altar is a high relief sculpture of the Last Supper, wrought from one block of statuary marble. The pavement is in a design of dark green, terracotta and white marble. The crucifix and candle sticks are fine examples of metal work: these and the handworked altar cloths were brought by the sisters from Argentina. The ceiling of the sisters' choir and the barrel vault of the sanctuary were considered the principal decorative features of the interior. Executed in fibrous plaster the ceiling is deeply coffered with enriched beams forming octagonal and square panels which are relieved by scrolls and centre flowers of Roman acanthus ornament. The whole effect is heightened by colour decoration, the background being deep rose-red, lapis lazuli, blue and black, and the whole of the coffering and enrichment is in gold. The design of the chapel is based on St Mary Major in Rome.

Such richly detailed surfaces and finishes render this particular building unique in Adelaide. The chapel is remarkable for its excellence of design and workmanship at a time when craft skills were still highly regarded. The consistency of detail and the marriage of the old convent building with the new is well carried through, the design being perhaps the finest to come from the hand of Walter Hervey Bagot. The richly carved altars were wrought by Signor Luigi Tommasi of Pietrasanta, Italy, and the stained-glass windows were designed and executed by Messrs Hardman & Co. of London. Those in the scholars' choir were from the studios of Montgomery and Troy (Melbourne and Adelaide). The bulk of the parquet flooring is of Australian oak, the borders of which are of Russian cedar.

The complex is part of the prominent Roman Catholic precinct situated east of Victoria Square between Wakefield and Angas streets. The terrace-like quality of the convent and the belltower of the chapel are also significant townscape features.

ACA, *Annual report 1926* (Building Surveyor), Assessments; *Advertiser*, 22 November 1922; *Builder*, 1 May 1923; Burgess, H.T., *Cyclopedia of South Australia*, Vol. 1, 1909, p. 215; Convent of Mercy Archives, Historical photographs; MLSA, Historical photographs (Town Acre 373); Morgan, E.J.R., & Gilbert, S.H., *Early Adelaide architecture 1836 to 1886*, 1969, p. 67; *Observer*, 2 December 1922; O'Connor, Sister D., Verbal information, 8 February 1988; Sisters of Mercy, *Centenary - The Sisters of Mercy, South Australia 1880-1980*, 1980; *South Australian Register*, 3 January 1871, 22 November 1922; Woods Bagot, *Ledger of commissions*.

Heritage of the City of Adelaide

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The property described in this Information Sheet is included in the Register of State Heritage places. A heritage listing does not mean or imply right of access by the public to such properties.

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	CONVENT OF MERCY	Building No	11/2022-2
Address	32-46 Angas Street	CT	4271/890

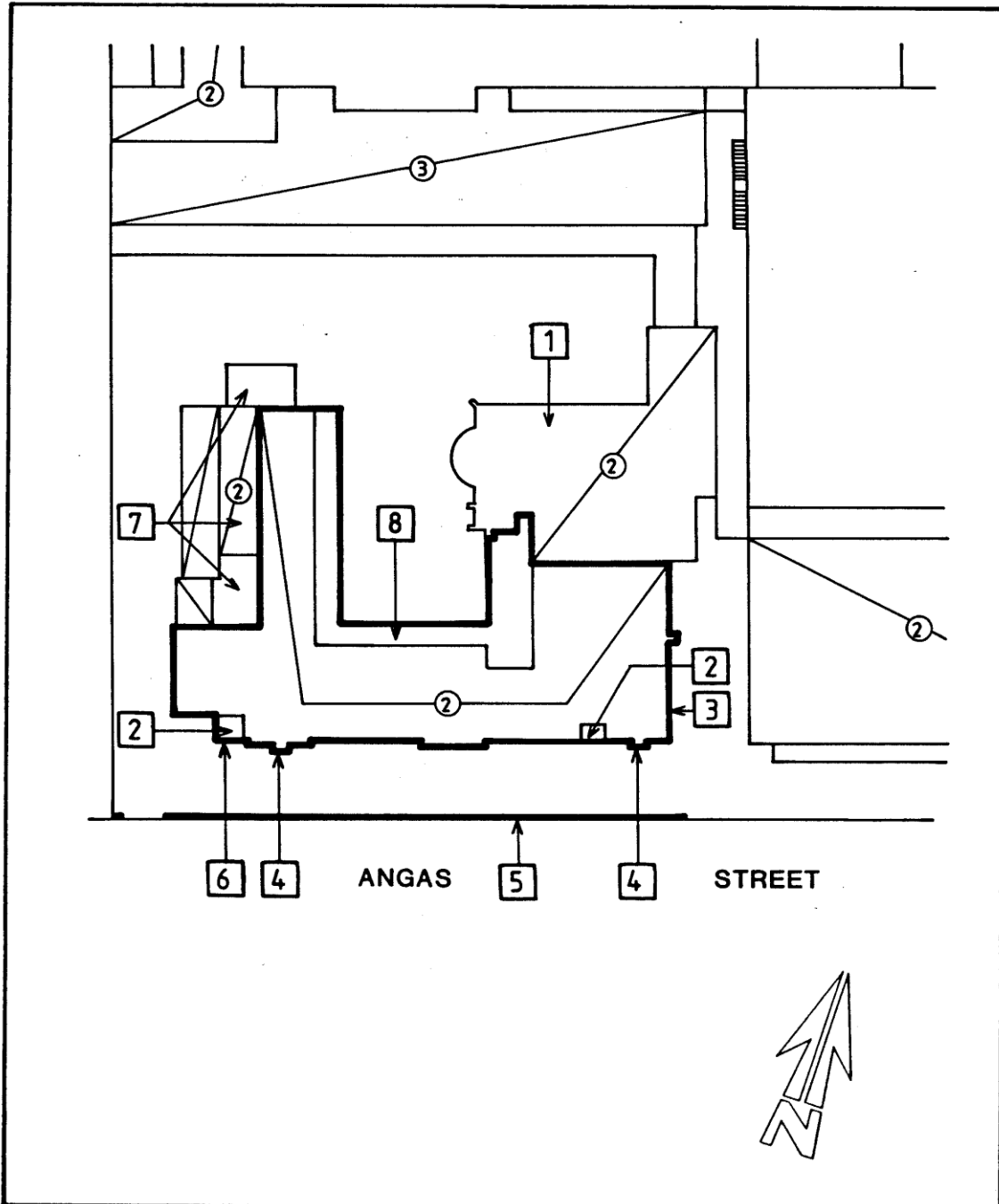


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NOTES:

1. Note Cunningham Memorial Chapel also listed.
2. Note elaborately stuccoed arched entrances.
3. Lined rendered elevation.
4. Note cast iron balustrades.
5. Coursed random bluestone with rendered pillars and cast iron.
6. Coursed random bluestone with stucco enrichment, rusticated quoins and rendered plinth.
7. Brick additions.
8. Verandah of stuccoed arches.

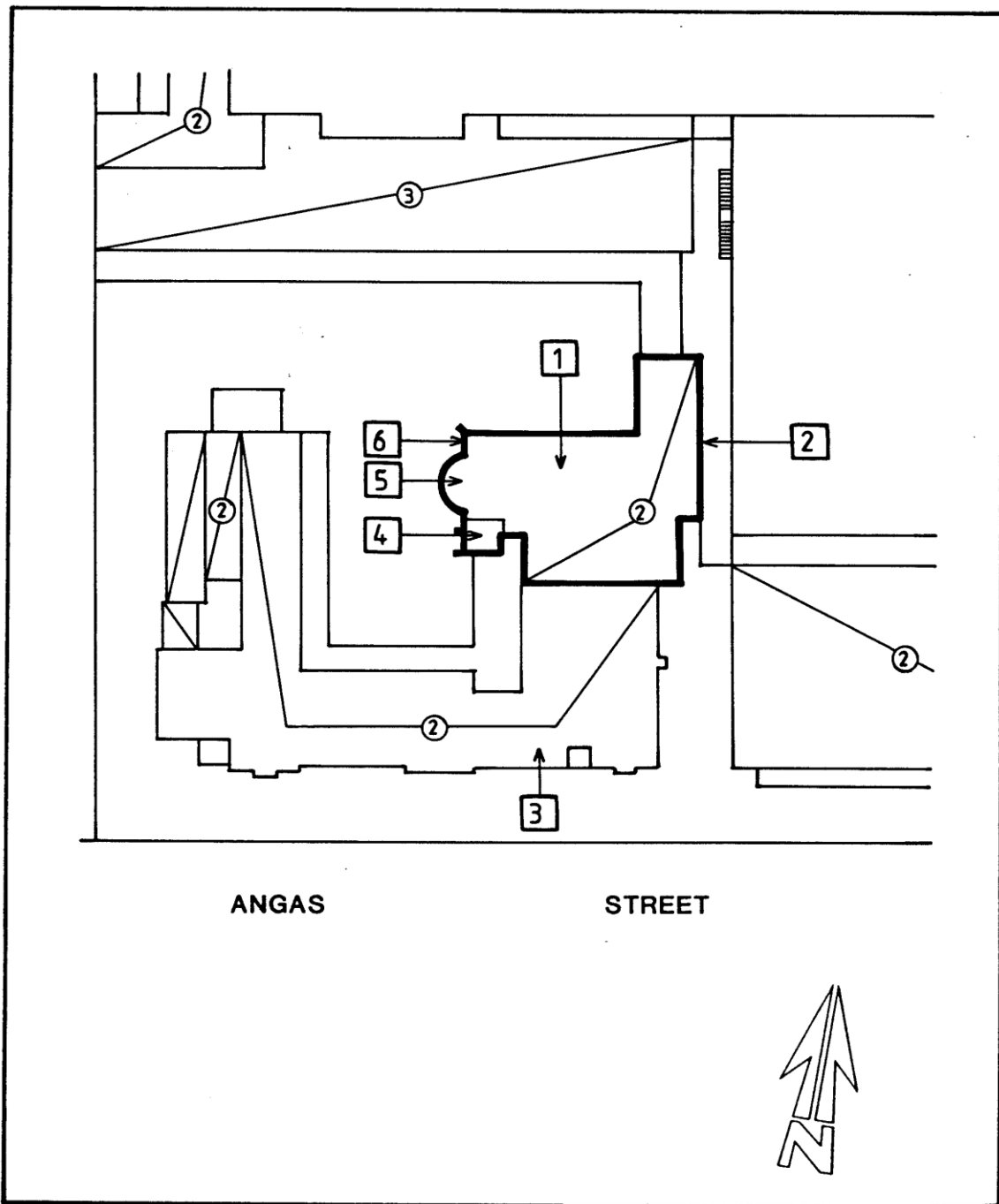


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The City Heritage Register-Definition of Items

Prepared by the Dept. of Planning and Development

Item	CONVENT OF MERCY - CUNNINGHAM MEMORIAL CHAPEL	Building No 11/2022-3
Address	Rear of 32-46 Angas Street; (on part land at 32-46 Angas Street)	CT 4271/890



ANGAS

STREET



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NOTES:

1. Terra cotta tiled roof.
2. Brick (Stretcher bond).
3. Note main building also listed.
4. Tower with sheet iron rolls roofing.
5. Apse with metal shingle roof.
6. Rendered.