
NAME: Nunyara Chapel

PLACE NO.: 14785

Address: 5 Burnell Drive, Belair, South Australia, 5052

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

Description:

The Nunyara Chapel is part of the Nunyara Conference Centre at Belair. The steel framed and glass walled building measures 46ft by 40ft (14m by 12m). It sits on a Basket Range freestone and concrete base embedded in a sloping site and offers views through a wooded area to the Adelaide plains below. The slope of the land has enabled the chapel to be designed with a single storey at entrance level and a double storey as the land drops away. The steel frame creates a verandah which encircles the building and shelters the western red cedar framed windows. A bell tower constructed of a steel frame with western red cedar vertical boards marks the entrance and a 26ft (8m) tall freestanding timber cross outside is framed by the windows of the sanctuary on the northern elevation.

Statement of Heritage Significance:

Nunyara Chapel, built in 1963 for the Methodist Church and designed by Maurice Doley of Cheesman, Doley, Brabham and Neighbour Architects, is an outstanding example of ecclesiastical architecture nestled in a site of natural beauty.

Relevant Criteria (Under Section 16 of the *Heritage Places Act 1993*):

- (e) **It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.**

Nunyara Chapel, built in 1963 for the Methodist Church, demonstrates a high degree of creative accomplishment in its design and integration of a place for worship with the natural environment at an intimate scale. It achieves this aesthetically through combining natural materials – timber, stone and straw – with steel and glass and skilful use of refined detailing. Nunyara Chapel's excellence was recognised in an Award of Merit from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) in 1966. It is included on the Australian Institute of Architects South Australian Significant Twentieth Century Architecture list.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Nunyara Chapel at 5 Burnell Drive, Belair, South Australia be **provisionally entered** in the South Australian Heritage Register as a State Heritage Place.

Relevant Criterion: (e)

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ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE:

Criterion (e)

It demonstrates a high degree of creative, aesthetic or technical accomplishment or is an outstanding representative of particular construction techniques or design characteristics.

Nunyara Chapel, built in 1963 and designed by Maurice Doley of Cheesman, Doley, Brabham and Neighbour Architects received an Award of Merit from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (SA Chapter) in 1966.

In contrast to the existing stone and brick tuberculosis sanatorium on the site, and to the predominance of stone or brick in ecclesiastical buildings in South Australia, Nunyara Chapel was innovative in its materials and construction methods. A steel structure carries the low pitched roof over glass walls to form a perimeter verandah. The use of glass allows light to flood the interior.

Nunyara Chapel demonstrates a high degree of creative accomplishment in its design, integrating religious worship with the natural environment at an intimate scale. It achieves this aesthetically through combining natural materials – timber, stone and straw – with steel and glass and skilful use of refined detailing.

Nunyara Chapel's design excellence is also recognised through its inclusion on the Australian Institute of Architects South Australian Significant Twentieth Century Architecture list. The citation states that its significance lies in its 'successful integration of the building's spiritual quality and its relevance to daily life. The first is achieved through its relationship to the wooded site, city view and the simple dignity of the detail. The second arises from its domestic form, scale, construction and materials (seen in 'contemporary' houses) – the idea of a church not being a place apart. The bell tower identifies the building's purpose.' (RAIA SA Significant 20th Century Architecture).

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The site on which the Nunyara Chapel stands was purchased by Dr Gault, a prominent medical practitioner in the Mitcham district, from Mr Alfred Stephen Chapman in July 1902 for the specific use of a private tuberculosis sanatorium. It was originally a much larger parcel of land, approximately 55 acres or 22 hectares. Meaning 'restored to health' in the language of the Bungala people of the Eyre Peninsula, 'Nunyara' sanatorium opened for patients in October 1902. The sanatorium building was a freestone and redbrick Federation style single storey structure with a red Marseilles tiled roof.

Following Dr Gault's death in 1917 Nunyara Sanatorium became a Military Hospital to treat tubercular soldiers returned from the First World War. Dr Gault's widow, Mrs Mary Gault, became the owner of Nunyara in 1919, living there with her daughter Maisie. In 1923 the land was divided and a portion was sold and later quarried. When Mrs Gault died in 1934 Nunyara was converted into residential flat accommodation for private tenants. However with the outbreak of the Second World War it was taken over for use by the Royal Australian Air

Force as a convalescent home. In 1945 ownership passed from the Estate of the late Mrs Gault to the Co-operative Building Society which proceeded to subdivide the land into residential blocks.

In 1946, the Methodist Church bought the Nunyara Sanatorium building which sat on Lot 6 with a street frontage to Burnell Drive and to Culley Avenue. Later, it purchased Lot 7. At its time of purchase the Methodist Church envisaged that the property would be used for training Sunday School teachers, youth leadership preparation, weekend and holiday fellowships and retreats, conventions and conferences. It retained the sanatorium building and renamed the site the Nunyara Memorial Youth Centre

The Methodist Church required a chapel to serve the Youth Centre but anticipated that it could double for use by local worshippers, and for weddings. The site selected for the chapel was a natural setting in a wooded area of native eucalyptus and pines. The South Australian architectural firm Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour designed the Nunyara Chapel. Maurice Doley was the partner in charge of the project.

In 1946 Maurice Doley had joined the successful collaboration of Gavin Lawson and Jack Cheesman to become Lawson Cheesman and Doley which practised as both an architectural and engineering firm. Lawson retired in 1952 and in 1954 Keith Neighbour joined Lawson Cheesman Doley and Partners. In 1956 Keith Neighbour and three of the senior architects, R.A. Brabham, A.L. Brownell and Newell J. Platten were offered and accepted partnerships. Following the death of Brownell in 1959, the following year the firm, then specialising in architecture and town planning, became Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour. It had four senior and six junior partners. In 1963 the firm established an office in Sydney with Brabham as Director. With the death of Brabham in 1970 the practice became Cheesman Doley Neighbour & Raffin Pty. Ltd. with Doug G. Raffin as Director in charge of the Sydney office. By 1973 the firm was the third largest in Australia. 1973 marked the retirement of Jack Cheesman and Maurice Doley as directors. However they continued an association with the firm as special consultants.

Maurice Doley (1907-1992) was a distinguished architect who served as the President of the RAIA (SA Chapter) from 1964-1966. He often used stone, timber and straw in his designs but also combined these natural materials with glass and steel to create beautiful buildings and environments. He used this approach in the design of his own home at Marryatville (1957) which is also listed on the Australian Institute of Architects South Australian Significant Twentieth Century Architecture list.

During his 22 years with Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour, draughtsman Ralph Knowles (1917-2004) was responsible for planning, documentation and administration work including for the Renmark Hotel, Greater Union theatres, Wilochra and Nunyara chapels, Regency Park School of Food and Catering, and Reynella Lodge. He was made an Associate of the firm in 1965.

The engineers for Nunyara Chapel were Barnes and Associates, an associated company of Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour, and the builders were Emmett Contractors Ltd. Nunyara Chapel took four months to construct and cost \$33,000. The pulpit, font and curtains were included in the price.

The new chapel building contrasted markedly from the old sanatorium building which lies to its south west. The steel framed and glass walled building measures 46ft by 40ft (14m by 12m). It sits on a Basket Range freestone and concrete base embedded in a sloping site and offers views through a wooded area to the Adelaide plains below. The slope of the land has enabled the chapel to be designed with a single storey at entrance level and a double storey as the land drops away. The steel frame creates a verandah which encircles the building and shelters the western red cedar framed windows. A bell tower constructed of a

steel frame with western red cedar vertical boards marks the entrance and a 26ft (8m) tall freestanding timber cross outside is framed by the windows of the sanctuary on the northern elevation.

Newell Platten, in his obituary for Maurice Doley, described how 'he enjoyed along with the mass and textures of natural materials the lightness of steel and combined these elements in the beautiful, glass walled chapel at Nunyara, which, surrounded by shading trees, disappears into, yet remains distinct, from its context in a masterly essay in understatement' (Platten 1992, p.4).

In 1977 the Methodist Church, Congregational Union and the Presbyterian Church combined to form the Uniting Church in Australia. Extensive redevelopment work was carried out in the 1980s to enable Nunyara Chapel to accommodate seminar and conference groups.

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Taylor Weidenhofer, 'Nunyara Conference Centre and Chapel', in Mitcham Heritage Survey, pp.103-110.

NAME: Nunyara Chapel

PLACE NO.: 14785

SITE RECORD:

FORMER NAME:

N/A

DESCRIPTION OF PLACE:

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DATE OF COMPLETION:

Opened 12 May 1963

REGISTER STATUS:

Description: Nominated
Date: 10 March 1986
Description: Recommended in Mitcham Heritage Survey Review
Date: 1995

CURRENT USE:

Description: Chapel, conference room
Dates: c.1986-current day (2011)

PREVIOUS USE(S):

Description: Chapel
Dates: 1963-c.1986

ARCHITECT:

Name: Cheesman Doley Brabham and Neighbour Architects
Dates: 1963

BUILDER:

Name: Emmett Contractors Ltd.
Dates: 1963

SUBJECT INDEXING:

Group:
Category:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:

Description: Mitcham

NAME: Nunyara Chapel

PLACE NO.: 14785

SITE RECORD (Cont.):

LOCATION:

Unit No.: -
Street No.: 5
Street Name: Burnell Drive
Town/Suburb: Belair
Post Code: 5052

LAND DESCRIPTION:

Title Type: CT
Volume/ Folio: 5608 / 546 & 5779/ 118
Lot No.: Allotment 7 & 15
Section: Plan No D4223 & F151170
Hundred: Hundred of Adelaide

AMG REFERENCE:

Zone:
Northing:
Easting:
Map Sheet No.:
Map Scale:

OWNER *:

Name: Uniting Church in Australia
Property Trust (SA)
Address: 33 Pirie Street
Town/Suburb: Adelaide
Post Code: 5000

NAME: Nunyara Chapel

PLACE NO.: 14785

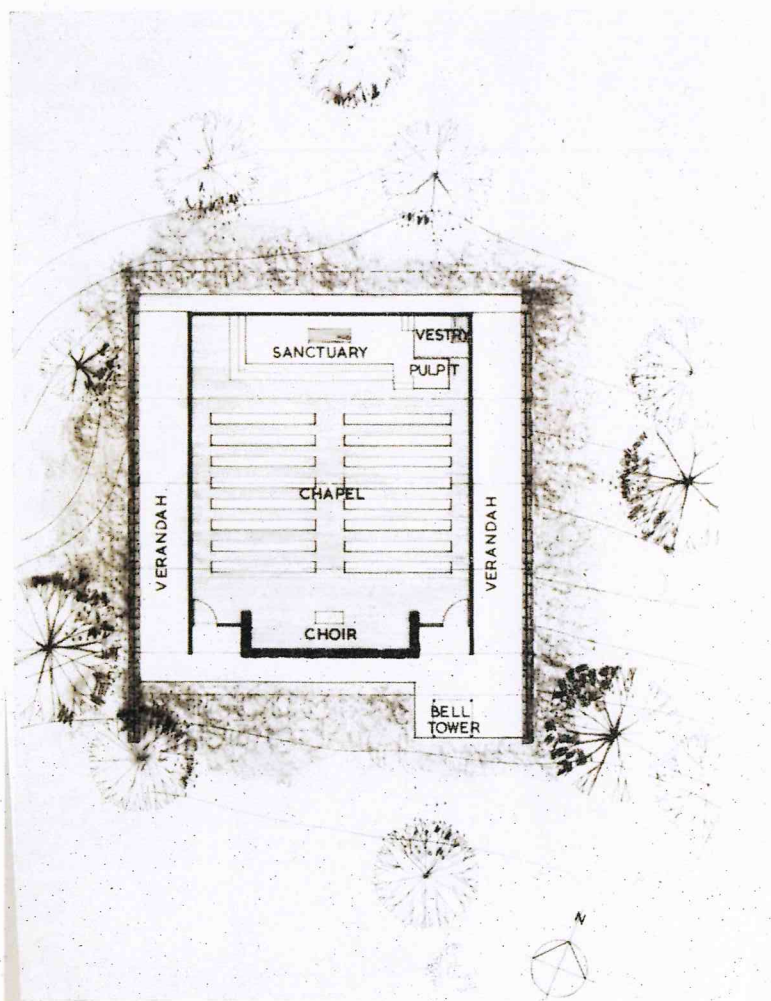
SITE PLAN



NAME: Nunyara Chapel

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PLANS

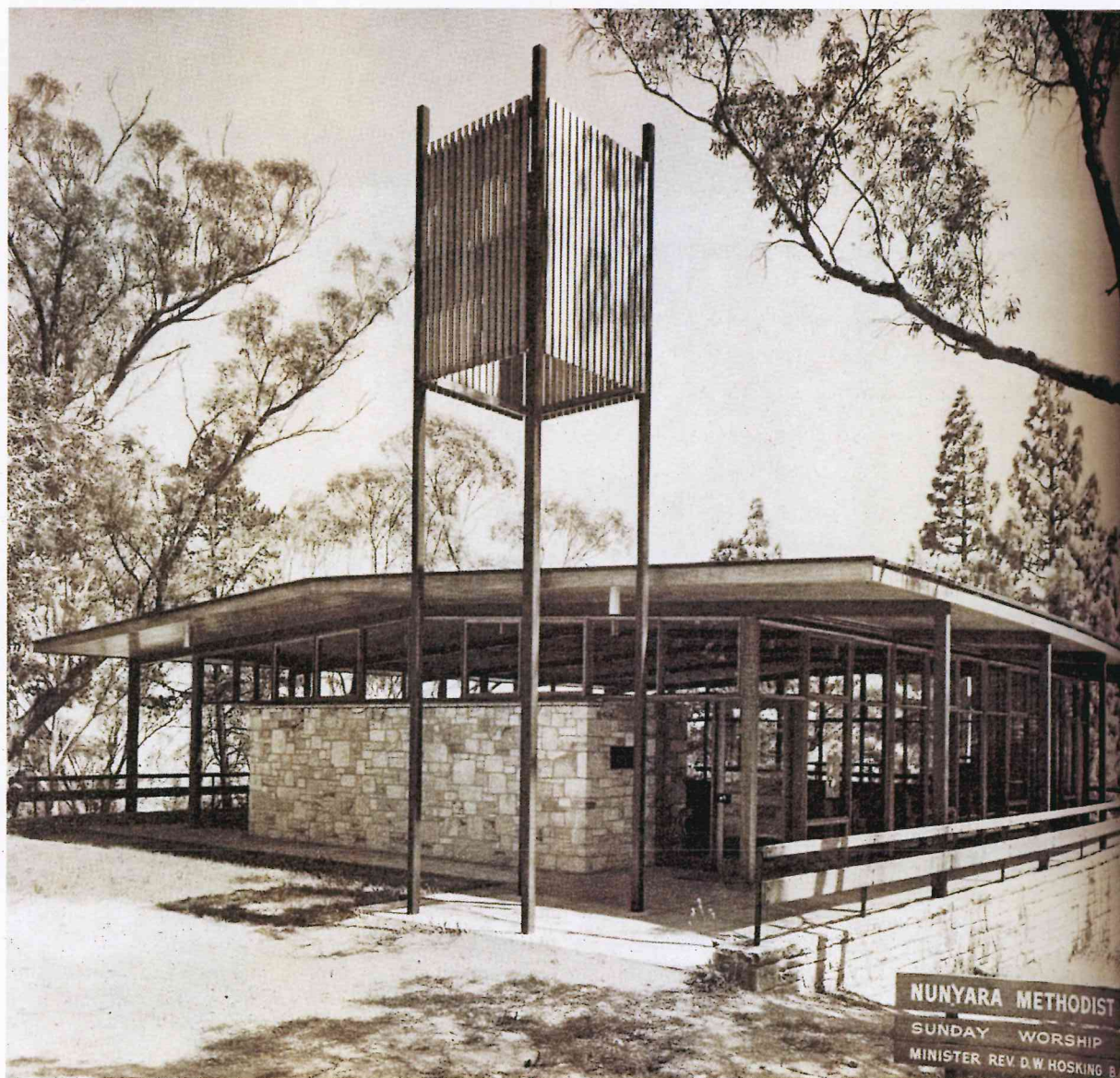


Floorplan of Chapel

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Nunyara Chapel soon after completion