

# McKellar Memorial Chapel

## Revised Statement of Significance

City of Greater Geelong, 2023

<b>Heritage Place:</b>	McKellar Memorial Chapel	<b>PS ref no:</b>	HO154
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Revised Name: McKellar Memorial Chapel  
Former Name: Grace McKellar House, the chapel part of "Bell Park" house  
Revised Address: 45-99 Ballarat Road, NORTH GEELONG VIC 3215 – Property No 277340  
Former Address: 45 Ballarat Road, BELL PARK VIC 3215 - Property No 277340

### What is significant?

The McKellar Memorial Chapel is of historical cultural heritage significance as an annex to the grand mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century rural residence of Bell's Park, that currently serves as a place of worship and contemplation within the Grace McKellar Centre, a modern community care facility.

Key significant features of the place are those which date from its original 1861 construction, inclusive of:

- The original rectangular footprint and rectilinear form of the Chapel with its bluestone wall construction and the gable-roof clad in slate; and
- The original symbolic element of the spire at the western end of the roof, and Gothic-style decorative elements including the ornate hexagonal bay window form on the eastern wall and the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> Century vertical sash windows in the bay and on the northern wall.

Features of contributory significance are those which date from its 1963-64 additions and alterations as a Chapel inclusive of:

- The bluestone entry vestibule on the south side, with a shallow-pitched steel roof, double timber-board doors and vertical sash windows to match the original;
- The bronze plaque fitted below the bay window inscribed 'Catharine McKellar Memorial Chapel, Dedicated to the Glory of God Who Cares, Opened 1<sup>st</sup> November 1964 by the Hon. W Thom MLC'; and
- The timber panelled ceiling and matching timber units, benches and end pew beneath the bay window.

### How is it significant?

The McKellar Memorial Chapel is of historical significance (Criterion A), aesthetic significance (Criterion E), social significance (Criterion G) and associative significance (Criterion H) to the City of Greater Geelong.

### Why is it significant?

The McKellar Memorial Chapel is historically significant as an early annex to the grand rural residence of Bell Park established by John Bell in 1853, and from which the surrounding suburb currently derives its name. The Chapel was added in 1861 possibly as a ballroom, designed by JL Shaw to match the original Gothic detailing of the homestead. By the 1920s the estate had been largely subdivided. Grace McKellar, the owner of the remaining 40 acres on which the house was situated had a vision for the place to be developed for the benefit of older and under-privileged people. Upon Grace's passing in 1944, her two daughters set about fulfilling her vision and the property commenced the development of the Grace McKellar House community care facility, which

opened in 1959. The Chapel is the only part of the original house that survived, being redeveloped and retained as a place of spiritual care and contemplation for the patients in 1964. (Criterion A)

The Grace McKellar Centre in which the Chapel is located is socially significant to the Geelong community as one of the largest community care facilities within the City, which has supported the community for over 60 years and whose initial development was made possible by public bequests and donations. Its conception was due to the vision and enterprise of three women - Grace McKellar and her two daughters Ernestine and Catherine - and as the last remnant of the McKellar family residence, the Chapel is the only surviving physical connection to them. (Criterion G)

The McKellar Memorial Chapel is significant for its association with early pastoralist Jonathan Bell, who developed the estate and a grand residence of which the Chapel was a part. It also possesses significant associations with Grace McKellar and her daughters, whom had pivotal roles in the development of the Grace McKellar Centre. Grace developed her vision for a local care centre following the closure of the Geelong Benevolent Asylum and transfer of residents to Ballarat in 1923, whilst the daughters took a role in implementing that vision. The Chapel was named the Catherine McKellar Memorial Chapel following its redevelopment in 1964. (Criterion H)

The McKellar Memorial Chapel is of minor aesthetic significance as an intact remnant of the grand Gothic-style house of Bell's Park, evidenced in the bluestone walls, slate roof and bay window ornamentation. (Criterion E)

### **Primary sources**

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Rowe, D., *About Corayo: A Thematic History of Geelong*, City of Greater Geelong, 2021, pp767-769, pp1082-83 & pp1054

Pescott, J., *Grace McKellar House, Geelong: the First 25 Years*, Neptune Press, Newtown 1984



## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

### Historical Background Notes – McKellar Memorial Chapel

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#### COMPILED NOTES FROM ABOUT CORAYO EXTRACT ON BELL PARK

Prior to European colonization, the area now known as Bell Park was thickly timbered, the trees so dense that when European settlers arrived, they could become lost. Acreages ranging from 40 to 100 acres were taken up by pioneer settlers including James Austin, T.P. Bingley, Robert Sutherland and Cullen and Edols in 1849 and 1850. The most substantial early development was the estate, 'Bell Park' (Figure 6.137), from which the suburb took its name. It was established by John Bell, nephew of John Calvert of nearby 'Morongo'. It was built in 1853 in a Victorian Picturesque Gothic style to a design by the early Geelong architect, John Young. The mansion house was extended in 1861 with a billiard room annex designed by Joseph Shaw, architect. All that remains of 'Bell Park' is this annex. The property was substantially subdivided in 1944 and the house and smaller acreage was donated by the Misses McKellar for use as a retirement home. While the house was demolished, the annex of 1861 was retained and converted into a chapel as part of Grace McKellar House in 1964.

Other developments also occurred in Bell Park including a golf course in c.1897.

Although it was claimed in 1928 that 'all the property with the exception of Bell Park and the golf links had been subdivided for building purposes', few houses were built until the post war immigration boom in the 1950s. (About Corayo Ch 6 pp767-769)



Fig 1. J. Norton, Bell Park , 1857-91. Source: accession H9311, State Library of Victoria. (from About Corayo Ch 6, p769)

## COMPILED NOTES FROM ABOUT CORAYO

### EXTRACT ON GRACE MCKELLAR CENTRE, 45-95 BALLARAT ROAD, BELL PARK

In late 1943, Cr F.W. Wallace, Mayor of Geelong and former Regimental Medical Officer with the Australian Light Horse in Palestine in World War One, commenced a movement towards the establishment of an old folks' home in Geelong. Discussions had been held with the Charities Board to facilitate any available funds. Support for the movement was given by the Geelong Trades Hall Council and all the municipalities in the Geelong district. The growing problem was evident in the elderly taking up local hospital beds or being isolated from their families in Ballarat and led to the formation of the Old Folks' Home Committee to raise the £50,000 estimated for the facility. The public desire for the aged care home was evident in the sum of £58,000 having been raised in just seven months. Even more remarkable was the gift of the 41 acre historic property, 'Bell Park' homestead (built in 1853 for John Bell – Theme 6), Ballarat Road, Bell Park by Misses Ernestine and Catharine McKellar. The Herald reported on the highly generous gift declaring that it 'assures that this historic landmark will be preserved and the dignified old 16-roomed bluestone and brick dwelling in good order will probably be the manager's quarters...'

While a laundry and boiler house were built in 1946 there were delays in the construction of the hospital accommodation until 1956. The lengthy duration in the commencement of the building of the facility was controversial, as was the demolition of all except the dining room of the original Bell Park homestead (it was converted into the Catherine McKellar Memorial Chapel). The initial design scheme was revised and in 1959, the facility – named the Grace McKellar House Geelong (Figure 8.129) in honour of the mother of the donors – was opened. The inaugural manager-secretary was Alfred Ormond De Forest who had extensive experienced in Institutional management, including the 700 bed Mount Royal Hospital. The first Matron was Miss G. Mandeville Halls who had been educated at Kinross Ladies College, Toorak, trained as a Voluntary Aid Detachment to providing nursing care during World War One. Matron Mandeville Halls subsequently trained at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and later joined the Melbourne District Nursing Society before being appointed to the Australian Inland Mission and then as Matron-Bursar of the Melbourne University Women's College, and Matron of the Ballarat and District Benevolent Home.

Since its beginnings, the Grace McKellar Centre expanded into providing other medical and health services and is now under the control of Barwon Health and offers community health services, residential aged care accommodation, rehabilitation services, and palliative care services. (About Corayo Ch 8, pp1082-83)

. . . in 1998, the Geelong Hospital, amalgamated with the Grace McKellar Centre, and city and suburban community health centres to form Barwon Health . . . (About Corayo Ch 8, pp1054)

### EXTRACT FROM BARWON HEALTH WEBSITE:

McKellar Centre: Originally named Grace McKellar House in 1959, when the first patients were admitted. The land on which the McKellar Centre is built was donated by Misses Ernestine and Catharine McKellar. Their mother, Grace, had an interest in the welfare of older and under-privileged people. Grace McKellar was concerned with the closure of the Geelong Benevolent Asylum in 1923, with residents being transferred to facilities in Ballarat, as there was not a suitable alternative available in Geelong. The land encompassed the site of the Bell Park Homestead. The chapel, on the grounds of the McKellar Centre, is the only surviving building of the homestead.

. . Our facilities build on the rich history of the McKellar sisters (Ernestine and Catherine) who chose to bring to reality the vision that their mother Grace McKellar had for the 40 acres of land where Wallace and Blakiston Lodge are situated. It was their intent to support the welfare of older and under-privileged people and hence the aged care centres were born.



Fig 2. Image of Chapel circa late 1960s from the cover of J Pescott's *Grace McKellar House, Geelong: the First 25 Years*

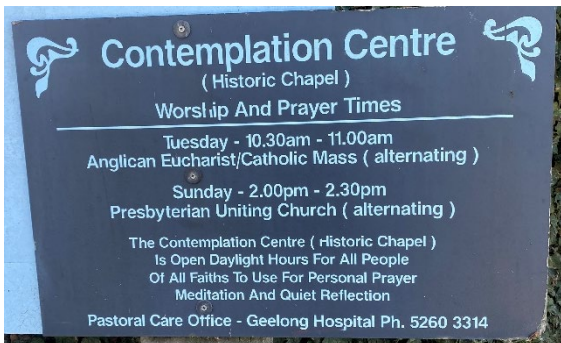
#### EXTRACT FROM BARWON HEALTH FOUNDATION WEBSITE

The McKellar Sisters: When the late daughters of Grace McKellar, Ernestine and Catherine decided to gift their 40 acre estate to the community just over 75 years ago, they could have never imagined the incredible facility it is today.

Grace McKellar had an interest in supporting the welfare of older and under-privileged people and, in memory of their mother, the children decided to donate the property to our local health service to benefit the people of Geelong.

Services provided there today are at the core of community health - including rehabilitation, palliative care and aged care - and there are also exciting new services soon to be established. In particular, we are looking forward to the official opening of the new Kids Rehab Centre very soon which is yet another example of our community's generosity.





Thousands of people have received care at the McKellar Centre over the years and it is a much loved community asset. Of course, the healthcare heroes working at the centre have always done an extraordinary job.



## Comparative Analysis

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The following places are comparative examples of Victorian Gothic architecture in Greater Geelong including:

<p><b>Coriyule</b> <b>1-69 McDermott Road Curlewis</b> <b>VHR H0272 / PS HO3</b></p> <p>A two story Gothic style homestead with coursed stone walls and iron tile roof, intricate timber looping barge boards, built in 1849 for Anne Drysdale and Caroline Newcomb.</p>	
<p><b>Hawthorns</b> <b>39 Skene Street, Newtown</b> <b>HO1623 &amp; HO156</b></p> <p>A two story Gothic style homestead with brick walls and a slate roof, intricate timber looping barge boards, built in 1876 for solicitor TC Harwood.</p>	
<p><b>Rosendale (formerly Haworth)</b> <b>116-118 Tanner Street, Breakwater</b> <b>HO52</b></p> <p>Originally a 9-roomed house with bluestone and stucco walls, designed by architect William Grundy and built in 1869/70 for tannery proprietor F Haworth.</p>	
<p><b>Former Geelong Grammar School</b> <b>55 &amp; 55A Maud Street, Geelong</b> <b>VHR H0188 / PS HO12</b></p> <p>A notable example of the work of the Geelong architects Backhouse and Reynolds illustrative of the Gothic style, and of which only one wing of what was once a large complex remains.</p>	

Health and welfare places are currently little recorded as heritage overlays within the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme. This is a notable thematic gap. The only place so recorded is:

**Sailors Rest,  
3 Moorabool St GEELONG  
HO1638 & HO221**

A 1912 Edwardian styled charitable mission on the Geelong waterfront



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