

ST JOHNS CHURCH GROUP

Lot 1 DP 2462 Cnr of Broughton and George Streets, Campbelltown
Cemetery, church building and site of father Therry's slab hut.



HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION:

Situated on a magnificent site overlooking the town and the undulating countryside around it, this is the most important cemetery. Amongst its ancient stones is perhaps the best known gravestone in Australia, that of the convict James Ruse (1760-1837) of Experiment Farm, with its endearing inscription carved with his own hand.

The site was one of 2.0ha (5 acres) given by James Burke in 1825 for a burial ground, chapel and school house. Mathew Healey's grave is also in St John's Cemetery, amongst other early settlers. The earliest grave is dated 1827.

The important and hitherto neglected church building is both an architectural landmark and a very early building associated with a famous pioneer priest. Its foundation stone was laid very early for a Catholic Church, in 1825, and its design is attributed to father Therry Himself. William Bradbury supplied the masonry. It was an ambitious structure for the day, possibly too ambitious, and it progressed slowly not being completed until 1841. a large building, somewhat out of the current architectural fashions of its time, it originally had unrendered stone walls and large upper windows and smaller lower windows with four centred arches and dressed stone. An old photograph, dated 1886, held by Campbelltown Historical Society shows it before the alterations were made. The building was subsequently rendered, a kitchen wing added and the tudoresque wooden wall decorations added. It now has two porches on the western and southern sides and two chimneys and a corrugated iron roof. The stone quoins and window dressings still give an impression of strength and solidity.

CONDITION AND USE:

The cemetery is quite well kept, though grass is tending to grow up and small trees. Still used on its eastern side for burials. The old church building has become dilapidated, as it is no longer in use as a church or a school. T one stage, the upper floor was partitioned off and the lower floor was subdivided to provide offices and schoolrooms. Since, the ceiling between the floors has never been completely removed, creating one large hall. The building is still under control of the Catholic Church. The building is probably the oldest Catholic Church building in Australia still extant.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE:

- Of historic, cultural, architectural, aesthetic and group significance
- Probably the best of the early cemeteries in New South Wales in terms of site and atmosphere. Provides wonderful townscape.

- The building alongside is both a landmark of the greatest importance in its local context and a monument to its builder, father Therry, an important historical figure.

HERITAGE LISTING:

LOCAL: LEP 2002

STATE: *Proudfoot:* Index No. 54, Category 1

Macarthur Regional Heritage Study: Map 5, Nos. 57 & 58

National Trust (NSW): Classified

NSW Heritage Act 1977: Listed Item. PCO NO. 193, G.G. No. 37
of 4.3.83

FEDERAL: *Heritage Commission (National Estate):* Registered