

## Place No. 07 Convent School, Roebourne (fmr)



Façade of the former Convent School building, Roebourne 2009, Courtesy National Trust of Australia (WA)

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Convent School, Roebourne (fmr)
Other Name (1)	Presentation Convent
Other Name (2)	Tsakalos' Butcher, Barnaby Jeans
Location/Address	
Street Number	6-8
Street Name	Wellard St
Suburb/Town	Roebourne
Other Locational Descriptor	mE515131 mN7703118 Longitude 117.1454 Latitude -20.7716

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
Department of Corrective Services	PO Box 21 Roebourne			
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
42399	775	P223088	LR3144 /914	

Listing and Assessment	
HCWA Reference Number	NEW ENTRY
State Register of Heritage Places:(Y/N)	No
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	No
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	No
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	
Management Category	<b>C</b>

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	c.1880

Construction Date (2)	
Site Type (Place Type)	Individual Building or Group
<b>Use(s) of Place</b>	
<i>Original</i>	EDUCATIONAL: Housing or Quarters Special School RELIGIOUS: Housing or Quarters Monastery or Convent
<i>Present</i>	VACANT/UNUSED: Vacant/Unused
<i>Other</i>	COMMERCIAL: Shop/Retail Store (single) Other - Butchers
<b>Construction Materials:</b>	
<i>Walls</i>	9. STONE 904 Local Stone 6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Roof</i>	6. METAL 606 Corrugated Iron
<i>Other</i>	3. CONCRETE 399 Other Concrete
Condition	Poor
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	Largely intact
<b>Physical Description</b>	
<p>The small stone rectangular building is constructed from random laid stone work and cement mortar, with a double pitched simple skillion roof. There is a corrugated iron and timber lean-to structure attached to the back of the building. The door faces directly onto the road and one of the front windows has been filled in with brickwork. The building has been whitewashed in the past, or possibly painted with white paint.</p> <p>Faded stencilled lettering is visible on the eastern wall of the building above the window in a curved shape that reads 'BARNABY' with the rest illegible, this would be a remnant from the period when the building housed the business Barnaby Jeans, during the 1970s. A faded blue and red logo is stencilled across the front bricked-in window, but is illegible. Large cracks are evident in the external walls, with stone work crumbling in sections.</p>	
<b>History:</b>	
<p>This block of land, originally Lot 26, was purchased in one of the first land grants in Roebourne in 1866 or 1867, by McKenzie Grant, an early settler with pearling and pastoral interests and a partner in the Portland Squatting Company. Grant owned the block until at least 1897.</p> <p>Bishop William Bernard Kelly, of the Geraldton Diocese had sought to establish a Catholic school in Roebourne from 1898. The convent was opened in c1901, with Reverend Mother Joseph O'Connell a driving force. Three nuns accompanied her: Sister Magdalen McDowell, Sister Patrick Walsh and Sister Anthony Walsh.<sup>1</sup> Sister Magdalen was one of the nuns who had joined the Presentation Order at Geraldton in 1898, where she trained to become a nun; she was stationed at Roebourne until 1906 when the convent was closed.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The convent school appears to have only operated for five years and it may be that funds were an obstacle. Upon arrival in Roebourne the nuns set about fundraising, organising a concert in Victoria Hall. However 'a small but influential group of parishioners, who were with the non-Catholic population, boycotted the initial fundraising activities.'<sup>3</sup> Eventually the nuns raised enough to purchase a suitable building and 'half an acre of ground goes with it', large enough to house seven or eight boarders, which presumably is the building on Wellard St.<sup>4</sup> In 1902, the convent had three boarders, with the</p>	

Rev. Mother expecting 'three more in less than a fortnight, and others are likely to follow...We have about a dozen children coming by train from Cossack. Our attendance is over thirty.' At that time it was the largest college in the Diocese.<sup>5</sup>

Fund raising continued, largely through concerts given by the convent. The *West Australian* published a report in 1901 of 'a highly successful concert...last night in Victoria Hall by the children attending the Convent School. The hall was crowded, and the concert reflected the greatest credit on the teachers and scholars.'<sup>6</sup>

Correspondence between ten year old Enid McRae and 'Aunt Mary' in the Children's Corner of the *Western Mail* in 1904 reveals, 'I go to the Convent School in Roebourne, and board there. We have four nuns; they are very kind. We are all fond of them. We have some nice school concerts...'<sup>7</sup> Another girl, Elsie Eva Harris, who lived at 'Station Peak' about 100 miles from Roebourne attended the convent school 'for three years without seeing home.'<sup>8</sup>

His Excellency the Governor and the vice-regal party arrived in Cossack in 1904, with the intention of visiting the area. During this time he visited the convent school where 'the children sang a hymn of welcome, and two clever little lassies danced spiritedly a Highland Fling before him.' The Governor also 'witnessed an exhibition of kylie and spear throwing by four expert natives.'<sup>9</sup>

It is not known for what purpose the building was first built, however the simple construction indicates that this is an early Roebourne building of c1880, which may have been used as a store.

The building was owned by JD Tsakalos' and operated as a Butcher Shop from at least 1949 to 1962, with Tsakalos still owning the building in 1970. During the 1970s the building operated as clothing store Barnaby Jeans.

#### Archaeology

There has been no known archaeological work at the building. There is potential for material evidence of the uses of the building over time, given its structure appears to have changed little over time.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

##### Historic theme (s)

- 1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT & MOBILITY
  - 104 Land allocation & interaction
  - 107 Settlements
- 3. OCCUPATIONS
  - 308 Commercial & service industries
- 4. SOCIAL & CIVIC ACTIVITIES
  - 406 Religion

##### Statement of Significance:

This building has historical significance for its connection with attempts by the Catholic Church to establish influence in Roebourne in the early twentieth century. The convent school provided education for the female children of Catholic families in the area of Roebourne, a minority religion within the community at that time. Despite its dilapidated state, the building contributes to the aesthetic value of Roebourne as an historic town, and reflects an early and simple style of building in Roebourne. Its use as a butcher and clothing store from the 1940s to 1970s reflects social significance for the community within living memory.

#### ASSOCIATIONS

Architect/Designer (1)

Architect/Designer (2)

Other Associated Person(s)	Bishop William Bernard Kelly Reverend Mother Josph O'Connell Sister Magdalen McDowell Sister Patrick Walsh Sister Anthony Walsh
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MHI Review 2012	Assessment undertaken, Place Record Form created
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**Wellard Street, Roebourne, showing the Butcher Shop on right, 1953**  
 Courtesy Shire of Roebourne Local History Office, 2005.2147

<sup>1</sup> *Our Red Patch: The Parish of Dampier, Karratha & Wickham*, commemoration booklet of the Centenary of the Diocese of Geraldton, 1998, p 11.

<sup>2</sup> 'Golden Jubilee Celebration by Presentation Nuns', *Northern Times*, 16 January 1948, p 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Our Red Patch*, p 11.

<sup>4</sup> Father Verlin letter to Bishop Kelly, 15 May 1902, quoted in *Our Red Patch*, p 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Our Red Patch*, p 12.

<sup>6</sup> 'Roebourne', *West Australian*, 31 October 1901, p 4.

<sup>7</sup> 'Correspondence' *Western Mail*, 30 January 1904, p 40.

<sup>8</sup> 'Correspondence', *Western Mail*, 11 November 1905, p 49.

<sup>9</sup> 'The Vice-Regal Tour Visits to Cossack and Roebourne', *West Australian*, 10 June 1904, p 5.