



26 November 1991

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST  
REID, CANBERRA  
CONSERVATION PLAN PRECIS**

A Conservation Plan and Report for St John's Church and Precinct was completed in May 1984 and approved by the Parish Council and the Heritage Committee of the ACT.

The Church and Precinct were previously classified by the National Trust of Australia and included in the Register of the National Estate by the Australia Heritage Commission in 1980.

The listing in the Register means that no action which will adversely affect the integrity of the place should be undertaken unless there is a feasible or prudent alternative and action should be taken to minimize this effect if it is unavoidable.

A thorough physical survey was carried out and foundation conditions examined. Because no drawings of the church existed, full measured drawings were prepared and the church and grounds adequately photographed. This work revealed many defects, particularly in the structure, fabric and windows.

**A. Stabilisation**

The report stressed that cracking movements had occurred over time in the stonework walls and the most significant of these were recorded. An evaluation of the soils was made by exploratory holes in the ground outside the church. In summary, these actions revealed that the soils encountered were moist, sandy and gravelly sandy clays which have a variable capacity for consolidation under the weight that the building imposes. These soils shrink and swell respectively with seasonal reductions and increases in ground moisture content.

It was decided that remedial work should be directed towards insulating the ground under and around the building from variations in moisture content which would result in stabilization of the soil conditions.

This action took the form of constructing an inground concrete wall about 1.5 metres (5 feet) deep and about 200mm (8 inches) wide all around the building about two metres (6 feet 6 inches) out from the perimeter walls. Concrete slabs were laid from the Church walls out to the top of the inground walls, stormwater drainage was renewed and channelled away. The surface of the slabs was then paved with cobble stones. The project was made possible by a generous grant from the Canberra

Community Development Fund and work was carried out during August and September 1987. Since then checking of the structure has been periodically carried out and it seems certain that the aims of stabilization have been achieved.

**B. Spire**

During 1987 it became evident that serious damage was being caused to the cedar shingles on the spire by flocks of cockatoos and galahs. They were chewing the soft cedar and dropping the pieces in piles all around the porch. A decision was taken to reshingle in hardwood shingles and a supply of these made from split Casurina Torulosa, commonly known as Forest Oak, was discovered in Northern N.S.W. These had been successful in reshingling such important buildings as the Hyde Park Barracks and Cadman cottage in Sydney. The reshingling took place between May and August 1988. During the work and with the advantage of the scaffolding a careful examination of the cross were found to be in a very defective state with advanced stages of rust settled in.

During the dismantling of the cross a bullet was found lodged in the wooden inner material. This had penetrated the outer thin metal lining and accelerated the rusting process. Both the metal cap and the cross were replaced in new material, with the cross in square copper tubing.

The spire work was completed in August 1988 and it appears the birds have been fully discouraged.

Funds were available from the Parish Building Fund and by a grant from the National Estate Grants Programme.

**C. Lych Gates**

Also in 1987, both the east and west lych gate structures were restored by rebuilding parts of the stonework, replacing damaged timbers in the frames and reshingling. These were covered with cedar shingles because the cockatoos are too timid to descend to the lower level of the lych gate structures.

In 1991, the seats and ornamental gates were restored.

**D. Stained Glass Windows**

The fourth stage of restoration began in mid 1990. The report at the time stated, "There are seventeen windows in the church, of which eight are in varying stages of failure. Those requiring urgent restoration are:

W2 Frances Campbell - located in the centre of the nave on the north wall.

W3 Elizabeth Gibbes - located at the sanctuary end of the nave on the north wall near the hymn board.

W5 George Campbell - located at the sanctuary end of the nave on the south wall near the pulpit.

W6 Col. J Gibbes - located at the sanctuary end of the nave on the south wall by the pulpit.

W7 Un-named located in the north-east corner of the sanctuary.

W11, W12 World War I - located in the south transept and constructed of glass pieces collected from bombed churches in and around Somme battlefields in France.

The windows needing restoration were in a considerable state of collapse as indicated by extensive distortion and slippage. There was also glass breakage, lead came crystallization, broken solder joints, loss of came cement, saddle bar decay and broken wires."

Mr David Beavis, a conservator and stained glass artisan of considerable experience, was engaged for the work. This involves photography, dismantling, boxing and removal to Mr Beavis' studio where the detailed and careful work of restoration is being done. Temporary boarding is installed in the window openings to give protection from weather conditions during the absence of the windows.

After installation, clear polycarbonate sheeting is installed externally instead of the wire grills. This material is strong, durable and will withstand considerable impact such as hail stones and vandal activity. It allows excellent light penetration and will enhance the beauty of the windows. It has a U.V. value of about 14 times that of glass. Windows completed so far are W2, W3, W5 and W6, in the Nave.

Funds were made available for this work from the Parish building fund (in the form of funds so designated from the proceeds of the 1989 Colonial Fair) the Friends of St John's, a grant from the Canberra Community Development Fund, and by the Gibbes family descendants for W3 & W6.

In conjunction with this work, a special study of the micro-climate is being made, to record the air temperature and relative humidity at the interior faces of the stained glass, interspace ventilation, the condensation effects and the air speed in the interspace. Also, small glass corrosion detection sensors will detect complex environmental factors and assessment of the combined factors of climatic stress, pollution and micro-biological contamination.

The work of conservation of the east window (W8) will be carried out following the study results, possibly about April 1992. Other windows, particularly the two each side at the back of the Nave under the Balcony, will also need some conservation works.

Work on W8 and the remaining windows will proceed as money becomes available.

Other features requiring conservation are:

### E. External Stonework

Renewal and/or replacement of coping stones to gables over the west wall of the sanctuary, the Nave/sanctuary junction and the Nave/tower junction, window weather mouldings and jambs, Buttress columns and cappings.

String courses and walls in several places.

Stonework tracery and key stones to stained glass windows and key stone and linings of sanctuary arch.

### F. Plastering & Painting

Internal areas of cracked and loose plaster are evident. Large areas will need replacement of plastering and will require the careful removal and replacement of some plaques etc.

Evidence of earlier rising damp is obvious especially in the west Porch. Since the stabilization process this defect seems to have been corrected.

The whole of the interior wall surfaces in the Nave and the Porch will then have to be repainted, including restaining of all timber works.

### G. Pews

All the pews need careful work to strengthen all joints, replacement of defective timbers and then refinishing the surfaces.

### H. Electrical Installation

Since its first introduction to the Church in 1924, the electrical system has become obsolete, overloaded and dangerous.

Unsightly conduits, surface mounted on the external walls, especially the north face of the tower need concealing. These conduits have been carelessly installed with some penetration of the delicate stained glass of the tower windows.

The whole system needs expert investigation and replacement in an expert and aesthetic manner.

### I. Heating

The present heating system is obsolete and ineffective. A report on the installation, its improvement or replacement is needed before upgrading is considered.

J. School House

Wall failure of the east end of the building, similar to that which occurred in the Church is evident. This has been investigated and a similar stabilization process is proposed.

The roof needs checking and replacement of some shingles. The surrounds fencing and so on all need assessment and proposals for upgrading put in action.

K. Grounds & Church Yard

The heritage area of the Precinct includes some fine landscape and tree planting. Any remedial work must be in accordance with the 1984 conservation plan. Some of the pine trees, now over 100 years old are showing signs of failure. The one between the Old School House and the Parish Centre has had to be recently removed and will hopefully be replaced by propagation of seeds gathered from its cones.

Many graves and tomb stones have settled, tilted and broken, some by vandal action. These all have to be assessed and appropriate action taken.

The work of conservation will extend over the next few years and will depend wholly on fund raising. We still hope to obtain grants from the A.C.T. Heritage Fund and from the National Estate Grants Programme, but these will only contribute a small amount of the money needed. Some funds will come from the proceeds of the annual fairs and from the Friends of St John's and others, but a great deal more will be needed by donations to the Conservation Appeal and other fund-raising activities.

We are proud of our beautiful little church with its long history in the life of this area and of its great Heritage significance. We have gone a long way in achieving the aims of the Conservation Plan and with hope, God's help and yours, we will ensure that the Church will Still Stand Firm for the generations to come.

*John Goldsmith*  
*John Goldsmith Honorary Architect*

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST  
CONSERVATION PLAN

ESTIMATE DECEMBER 1991

( A. Church Stabilisation (complete)		\$33,283.00
( B. Spire Reshingling & New Cross (complete)		28,000.00
1 ( C. Lych Gates (Complete)		2,500.00
( D1. Stained Glass Windows		
( W2, W3, W5, W6 (complete)		61,528.00
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		\$125,311.00

( Funds for these works came from		
( 1. Heritage Grants	\$91,475.00	
( 2. Church Building Fund; part proceeds	]	
( from Colonial Fairs	]	
( 3. The Friends of St. John's	] 33,836.00	
( 4. Descendents of Col. and	]	
( Eliz. Gibbes (W3 & W6)	]	

( D2. Remainder of Window		84,000.00
( E. Stonework		120,000.00
( F. Plastering, Painting, Staining, etc.		30,000.00
( G. Pews		6,000.00
2 ( H. Electrical		30,000.00
( I. Heating		10,000.00
( J. School House		40,000.00
( K. Grounds & Grave Yard		80,000.00
( Other		50,000.00
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		\$450,000.00

1 + 2 = \$575,311.00

Amended 6.12.91

Say : \$600,000.00