

St Mary's College Main Building
15 Guildford Terrace



St Mary's College Main Building

Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The St Mary's College Main Building is one of two surviving remnants of old school buildings on this site. The hall was once part of a large 1930 classroom block and has aesthetic value for its attractive Gothic detailing that gives a glimpse of the architecture of the original building.
- St Mary's College was one of the earliest schools established in Wellington and may be the longest functioning school in the city. The Main Building (Gabriel Hall) is one of the oldest parts of the complex and helps to maintain both the convent and school's strong association with this site.

District Plan:	Map 18, reference 138
Legal Description:	Lot 2 Pt Lot 1 Plan A/2975 Pt Lot 4 DP 3284 SO33536
Heritage Area:	None 2012
HPT Listed:	Historic Place Category
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	St Mary's College; Golder's Hill; Gabriel Hall; Building 'A' Gabriel Block
Key physical dates:	1929 - 31 Constructed 1984 Classrooms demolished and replaced with new
Architect / Builder:	Clere and Clere / Fletchers Construction
Former uses:	School Hall & classroom block
Current uses:	School hall
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 163363 Bdg StrengthInv Bldg A - School - St Mary's College - Private School. Status 'NOT Earthquake Prone' 2013

Extent: CityView GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History ¹

St Mary's College was one of the earliest schools established in Wellington and may be the longest functioning school in the city. The Main Building (Gabriel Hall) is one of the oldest parts of the complex and helps to maintain both the convent and school's strong association with this site.

Bishop Viard arrived in Wellington in 1850 along with a group of French Marist Fathers² and a group of young English women who had worked or trained as teachers in Auckland and Whangaroa. Land was purchased in Thorndon for church purposes and a cathedral (1851), bishop's residence, convent (1850) and three separate schools were built on the site. These replaced an earlier multi-denominational 'Classical and Elementary English School,' led by the Rev. J.J.P. O'Reilly, that had operated from St Mary's Chapel since 1847.³

A girl's convent school opened on the Hill Street site in 1850 and this moved from the convent building into an adjacent purpose-built timber building in 1852. A separate boy's school opened in 1851 and this was led by a male teacher, Robert Huntley. The third school, named The Providence of St Joseph's Maori Girls College also opened in 1852.⁴ The Providence was a charitable foundation and later became an orphanage / industrial school. It moved to a larger site in Upper Hutt in 1910 and a remnant of the original 1852 building, known as the St Joseph's Providence porch, remains on the site of the current girl's school.

Sister Mary Cecilia (Catherine McCann) was initially placed in charge of the convent and girls' school. McCann had previously taught a class of 103 girls at St Patrick's School in Auckland, alongside Robert Huntley who taught a class of 118 boys.⁵ The convent school, like the earlier 'Classical and Elementary English School' continued to accept girls of all denominations as both day students and boarders, and some travelled from as far as Otago to attend the new school.⁶ McCann later moved to lead the Providence and was replaced by 21-year old Sister Mary Joseph (Mary Ann McGarvey) as Senior Sister of the convent and school. The rules of conduct imposed by Bishop Viard were so strict that there was no visiting allowed between sisters of the convent and the Providence, even though the two institutions were sited within a few minutes walk of each other.⁷

By 1861 the original 'group of devout young ladies'⁸ had either fallen ill, moved away or died, and a group of Sisters of Mercy arrived from Auckland to 'take over' the convent, including the convent school and the Providence. The Sisters of Mercy

¹ Note: This report is an updated version of the WCC Heritage Inventory 2001 ref GUIL1

² Simon Daisley, 'St Joseph's Providence Porch, St Mary's College' NZHPT website updated October 2011 <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1425>

³ Page 1 Advertisements Column 3 *New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian*, 18 December 1847, Page 1

⁴ Margaret H Deere, *Girls in Bonnets: The life and times of the young women who founded St Mary's College 1850 – 1860*, (St Mary's College Wellington, 2010); Sacred Heart Parish Council, "Sacred Heart Parish, Wellington – 125th anniversary November 1975" (1975); CONSECRATION OF ST MARY'S NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH. *Wellington Independent*, 10 December 1851, Page 3

⁵ Deere (2010) 15

⁶ 'History of St Mary's College', St Mary's College website accessed March 2013 <http://www.st-marys-wellington.school.nz/about-st-mary-s-college/history-of-st-mary-s-college/>

⁷ Deere (2010) 58-59

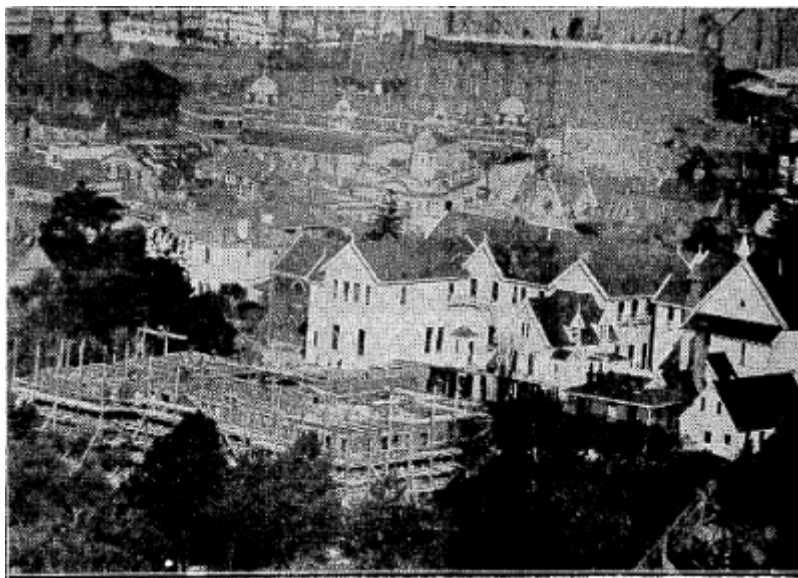
⁸ F Irvine-Smith, *Streets of My City*, (Auckland: A.H and A.W. Reed, 1967) 151

convent continues to operate alongside the college to this day (although the present structure dates from 1961). There are no remaining Sisters on the teaching staff, but they remain the Proprietors of the college and have an active presence on the board of trustees.⁹

Although the school had been teaching secondary education for many years it was not officially registered as a college until 1926, which may have led to the decision to build a new main building. Clere and Clere were retained to prepare designs and these were ready by August 1929. The contractors were Fletcher Construction. The permit was issued on 26 February 1930 and the estimated cost was £22,883.¹⁰ The building had a central portion containing the Hall, around which were 14 classrooms. The building's main façade faced Hawkestone Street and was comprised of a four storey block of classrooms; the 'rear' façade incorporated the single storey hall flanked on either side by two storey classroom blocks. Although the school continued to expand, the main building remained the focus of the College's activities.

The college closed its boarding facilities in 1976, the 50th anniversary of the registration of the college.¹¹ In 1984, faced with rising maintenance costs, the school decided to demolish almost all of the main building including the four and two storey blocks of classrooms. The single storey hall was retained and incorporated into the new block of modern brick-clad classrooms.

Gabriel Hall is a remnant of a much larger building and its significance has been diminished by the demolition of the classrooms that formed the bulk of the original structure. However, what remains has significant aesthetic value both in its exterior design and in the quality of its impressive interior space – the College Hall. It is a splendid example of the work of Clere and Clere and exemplifies their competence in designing collegiate buildings.



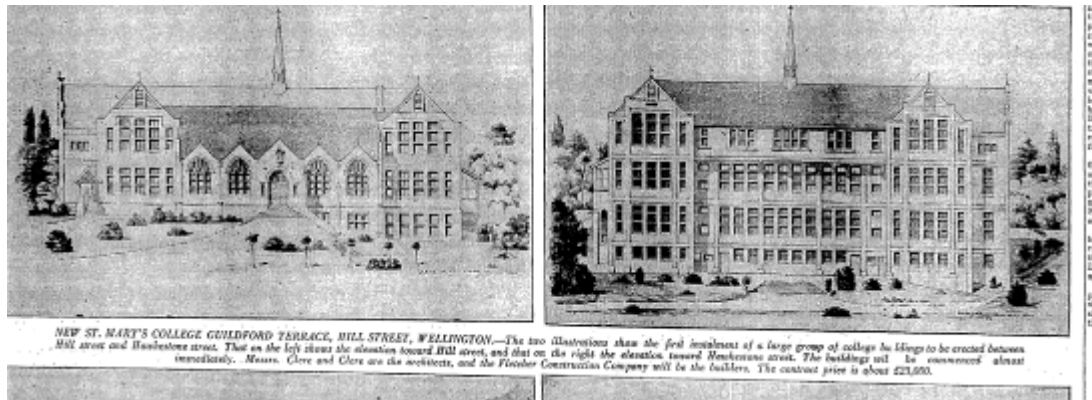
1930 - 'Additions to St Mary's College – View taken from Wadestown Hill showing the progress of work in the erection of the new wing to St Mary's College, Hill Street.'¹²

⁹ 'Board of Trustees', St Mary's College website accessed March 2013 <http://www.st-marys-wellington.school.nz/community/board-of-trustees/>

¹⁰ Permit B9206, 'application to erect St Mary's College', WCC Archives

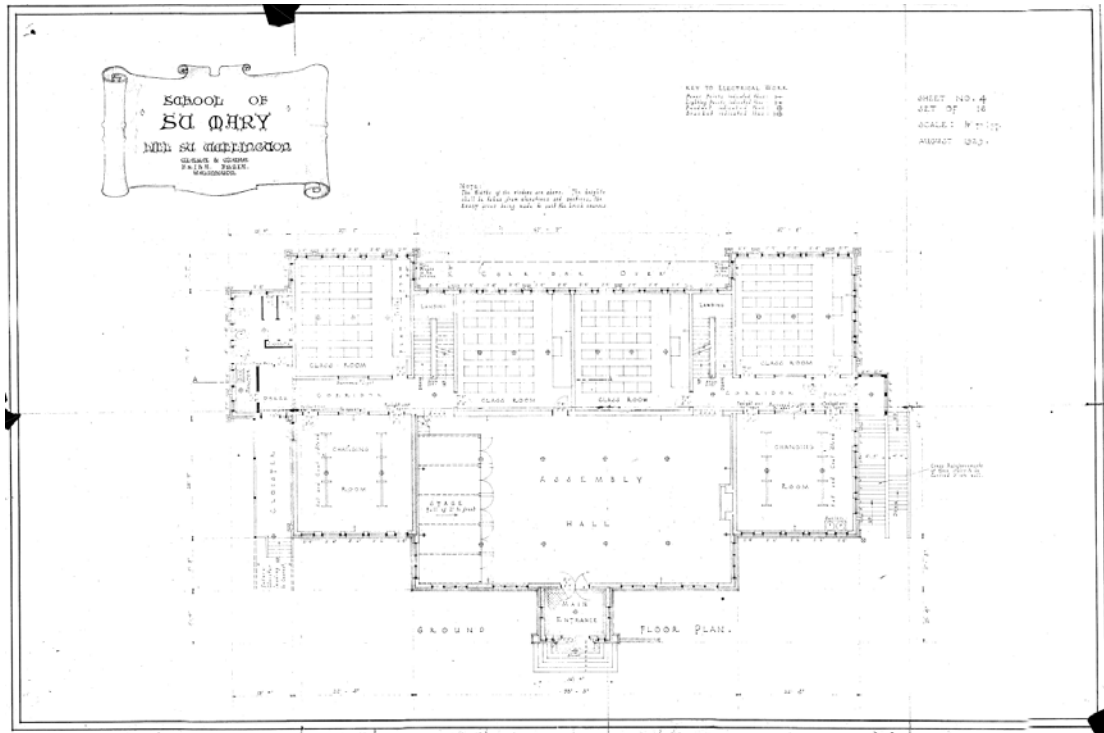
¹¹ The magazine of St Mary's College, vol.1 no.1, 1976, p.55

¹² ADDITIONS TO ST. MARY'S COLLEGE.—View taken from Wadestown Hill showing the progress of work in t... [truncated] *Evening Post*, 7 May 1930, Page 9

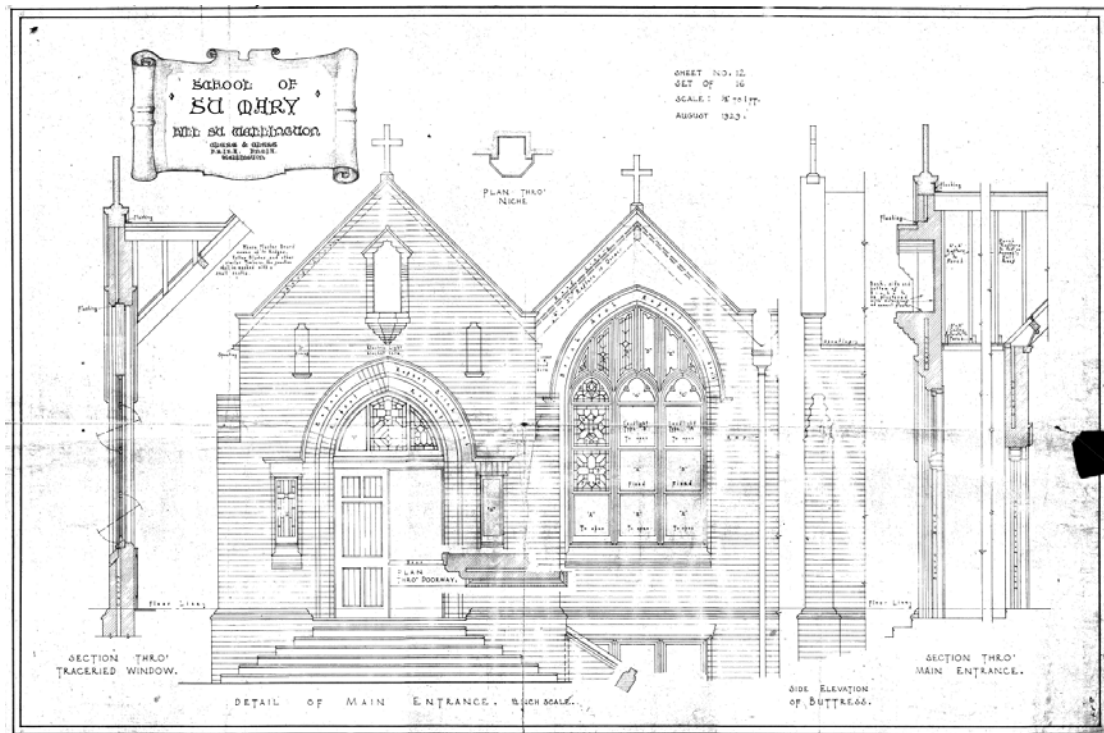


1929 - 'New St Mary's College Guildford Terrace, Hill Street, Wellington – The two illustrations show the first instalment of a large group of college buildings to be erected between Hill street and Hawkestone street. That on the left shows the elevation toward Hill Street, and that on the right the elevation toward Hawkestone street. The buildings will be commenced almost immediately. Messrs. Clere and Clere are the architects, and the Fletcher Construction Company will be the builders. The contract price is about £23,000.¹³

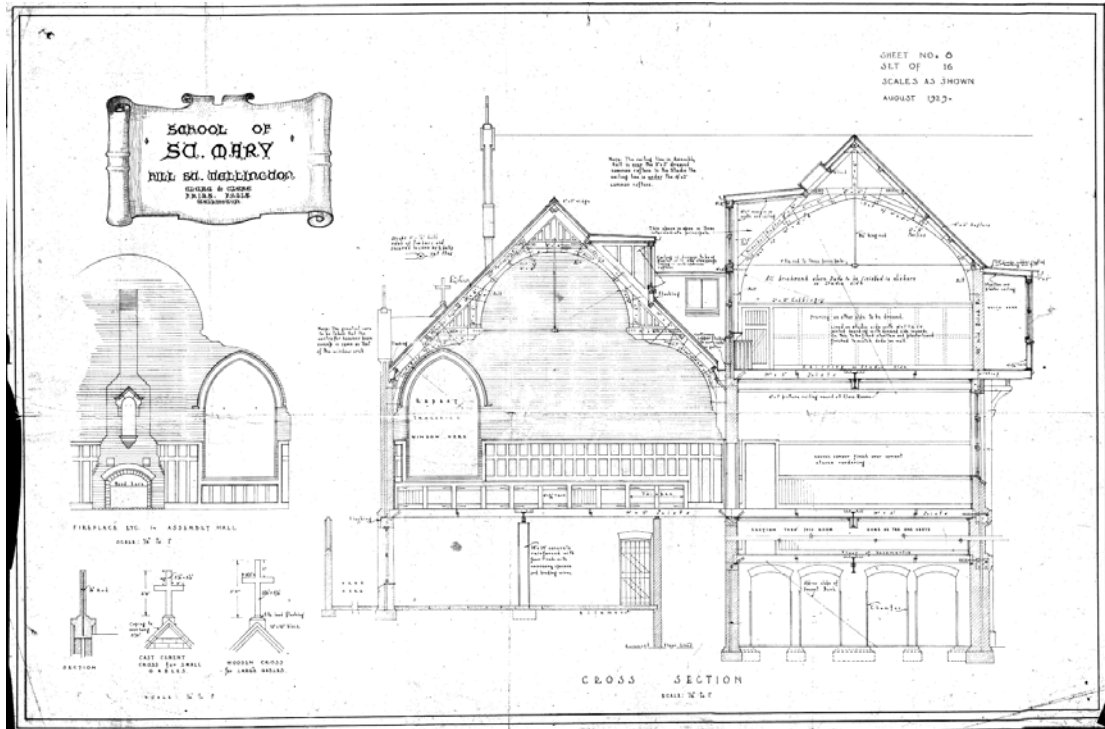
¹³ St Mary's College, *Evening Post*, 7 November 1929, Page 7



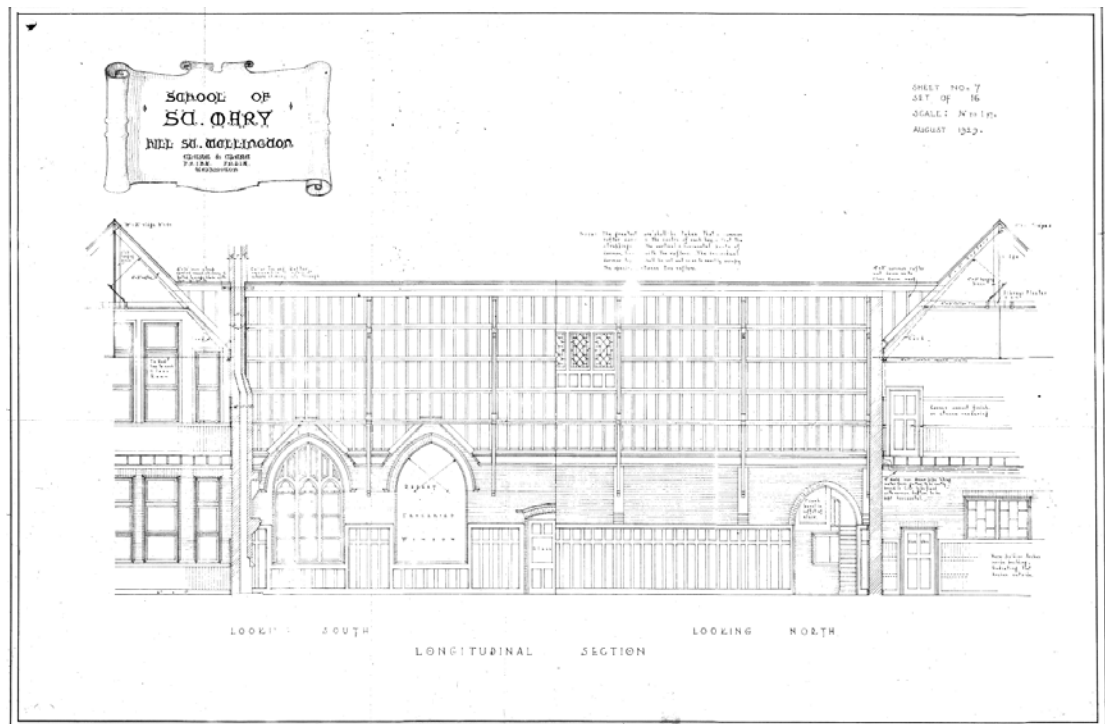
1929 – Ground floor plan as proposed. Note that the hall was once surrounded by classrooms but these have since been demolished to the east, west & north.



1929 – Detail of main entrance



1929 – Section through the hall. Note that the building shown to the right of the main hall in this image has been demolished and only the hall remains.



1929 – Long section through the hall.

Owing to the lack of sufficient accommodation it has been found necessary to erect a new building to house St. Mary's College, and this is now finished, and was used by the pupils for the first time yesterday. No formal opening was held, but it is hoped to hold a garden party at a later date. The new building, which cost about £25,000, is of brick and reinforced concrete, and will be devoted to kindergarten, primary, and secondary, and commercial education. In the kindergarten department small boys will now be enrolled. There is a frontage of four stories to Hawkestone street, decreasing to two stories at the back, and accommodation has been provided for 300 scholars.

February 1931 - 'St Mary's College' description of the new college buildings at St Mary's College.¹⁴

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1929-31	Constructed
1984	Classrooms demolished, structural scheme to strengthen hall.
2009	Application to replace existing roof slates with light weight 'torch-on' membrane 'shingles'
2010	SR216070 RC Additions & Alterations to Heritage Building (Roof & Plant)

1.3 Architect

CLERE, Frederick de Jersey, 1856-1952

Frederick Jersey de Clere was born in Lancashire, the son of an Anglican clergyman, and spent his youth in Tickenham, Somersetshire.

He was taught drawing by M.R. Hagreen, head architectural drawing master at South Kensington. Clere was articled to Edmund Scott, an ecclesiastical architect of Brighton. While with Scott he would almost certainly have observed at close hand the architect's early use of concrete in the construction of two Brighton churches, St Bartholomew's and St James'; once articled he joined Robert Jewell Withers, a London architect and a follower of the Ecclesiologists. Clere became his chief assistant and joined the Architectural Association in London.

Clere arrived in New Zealand in 1877, practising first in Feilding and then in Wanganui. He later came to Wellington and practised there for 58 years. He was elected an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1882 and a Fellow in 1886. He held office for 50 years as one of five honorary secretaries in the Empire.

¹⁴ ST. MARY'S COLLEGE Evening Post, 11 February 1931, Page 16

In 1883 he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church, a position he held for most of his professional life.

Clere was also a member of the Concrete Institute of London and an enthusiastic advocate of its building properties. He was a pioneer in reinforced concrete construction in New Zealand but it took him some time after his arrival in the country to put his ideas into practice. His first ferro-concrete ecclesiastical design was the Anglican Church of St Mary of the Virgin, Karori (1911). He followed this with St Matthew's Anglican Church, Hastings (1913), the first Gothic church built in concrete. St Mary of the Angels (1922) is the most outstanding example of this oeuvre and certainly his best known church. Another fine design is the brick All Saints Church, Palmerston North (1911). Arguably Clere's best church design was a large Gothic reinforced concrete Anglican cathedral for Wellington city (1917), but it never left the drawing board.

As well as being pre-eminent in church design, Clere was responsible for many domestic and commercial buildings among the best known of which are the Harbour Board and Bond Store, Wellington (1891), the Wellington Harbour Board Buildings and, in association with his son, the Renaissance-styled AMP head office (1928). Clere was also involved in the design of large woolsheds in Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa.

Clere was active in the formation of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and served on their council for many years. He was a member of the Wellington Anglican Diocesan Synod and the General Synod. He was also a member of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. Clere practised on his own and in association with other architects, including his son.¹⁵

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

St Mary's College Main Hall as it stands today is a portion of the original building. As completed in 1931 the structure comprised a central assembly hall facing onto the courtyard that is the focus of the school. The other three sides were classrooms, 14 in all. The classrooms wrapped around the hall, two storeys high on the Guildford Terrace side and an impressive three storeys high on the north and west sides facing Hawkestone Street.

Faced with the prohibitive cost of strengthening the whole building, a solution was found which retained the hall, which was the most significant space, and its facade to Guildford Terrace. This facade has a row of five gables, the central one projecting forward as an entrance porch, with a niche and statue above the main doors and the others containing large Gothic windows with tracery. Each gable is surmounted by a cross. Modern concrete buttresses now separate the gables, these being elements of the new structural system that protects the building against earthquake damage.

The assembly hall remains a very impressive space with something of the character of a baronial hall. Dark stained timber trusses span the width of the hall, the walls are brick with some timber panelling, and there is an open fireplace at one end. The chimney rising above the northern end gable is the only asymmetrical part of the composition of the front elevation. Materials are of the best quality - brick being the

¹⁵ From WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Appendix III – sources N.Z. Building Progress; July, Dec. 1913; Aug., Sept., Oct., 1917; April 1922, NZHPT Glossary

main visible material inside and out. The roof was originally sheathed in slate but these have since been replaced with lightweight fibreglass asphalt replica 'shingles'.¹⁶

2.2 Materials

Brick walls

Slate roof (replaced with lightweight fibreglass asphalt replicas – 2009) on timber structure

Jarrah timber internal panelling, fibrous plaster ceilings, heart matai flooring

2.3 Setting

The Main Building is set within the grounds of a Catholic girls school in an area predominated by ecclesiastical buildings and faith-schools including the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, St Mary's Convent, Sacred Heart Cathedral School (primary), and the Protestant St Paul's Cathedral.

3.0 Sources

¹⁶ From WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Guil-1

ADDITIONS TO ST. MARY'S COLLEGE.—View taken from Wadestown Hill showing the progress of work in t... [truncated] *Evening Post*, 7 May 1930, Page 9

'Board of Trustees', St Mary's College website accessed March 2013 <http://www.st-marys-wellington.school.nz/community/board-of-trustees/>

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Irvine-Smith, F. *Streets of My City*, (Auckland: A.H and A.W. Reed, 1967) 151

N.Z. Building Progress; July, Dec. 1913 Aug., Sept., Oct., 1917; April 1922

NZHPT Glossary

New Zealand Spectator and Cook's Strait Guardian, 18 December 1847, Page 1

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St Mary's College, *Evening Post*, 7 November 1929, Page 7

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE *Evening Post*, 11 February 1931, Page 16

The magazine of St Mary's College, vol.1 no.1, 1976, p.55

WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Appendix III

WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001 ref Guil-1

4.0 Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

Cultural heritage values

Aesthetic Value:

Architectural: *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The St Mary's College Main Building is one of two surviving remnants of old school buildings on this site. The hall was once part of a large 1930 classroom block and has aesthetic value for its attractive Gothic detailing that gives a glimpse of the architecture of the original building.

Townscape: *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

Group: *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

The building has some group value for its association with the many ecclesiastical buildings, institutions and schools nearby.

Historic Value:

Association: *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The building has a long association with the Sister's of Mercy, an international religious order founded by Catherine McAuley in Dublin in 1831, and the site has an association with Bishop Viard and the Society of Mary (Marist religious order).

The building was designed by Clere and Clere, prominent local ecclesiastic architects.

Association: *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

St Mary's College was one of the earliest schools established in Wellington and may be the longest functioning school in the city. The Main Building (Gabriel Hall) is one of the oldest parts of the complex and helps to maintain both the convent and school's strong association with this site.

Scientific Value:

Archaeological: *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

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Educational: *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

Technological: *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

The building has some technological value as an example of the materials and construction details and techniques used in Wellington's earliest buildings.

Social Value:

Public esteem: *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual: *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:

Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?

Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?

The site has been in continued use by the convent and its associated schools for over 150 years. The hall is over 80 years old and is a tangible reminder of the development of the site. It therefore contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the college.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

Level of cultural heritage significance

Rare: *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

Representative: *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

Authentic: *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

5.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	None	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files	Y	
Conservation Plan	None	
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	None	

Background research