

# ULTRA

## Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis

TO CITE THIS PAPER | Lisa Marie Daunt. "Tradition and Modern Ideas: Building Post-war Cathedrals in Queensland and Adjoining Territories." In *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 38, Ultra: Positions and Polarities Beyond Crisis*, edited by David Kroll, James Curry and Madeline Nolan, 516-531. Adelaide: SAHANZ, 2022. Accepted for publication December 1, 2021. DOI: 10.55939/a4008playo



Image: Michaelmore, Roeger & Russell, *Chester House*, Belair 1966, State Library of South Australia BRG 346/28/6/2.

### PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND (SAHANZ) VOLUME 38

Convened by The University of Adelaide, School of Architecture and Built Environment, Adelaide,  
10-13 November, 2021.

Edited by David Kroll, James Curry and Madeline Nolan.

Published in Adelaide, South Australia, by SAHANZ, 2022.

ISBN: 978-0-646-85443-4

Copyright of this volume belongs to SAHANZ; authors retain the copyright of the content of their individual papers. All efforts have been undertaken to ensure the authors have secured appropriate permissions to reproduce the images illustrating individual contributions. Interested parties may contact the editors.

# Tradition and Modern Ideas: Building Post-war Cathedrals in Queensland and Adjoining Territories

**Lisa Marie Daunt**  
Independent Scholar

## Keywords

Modern cathedral architecture  
Queensland  
Northern Territory  
New Guinea  
A. Ian Ferrier  
Lund Hutton Newell  
Black and Paulsen  
Conrad  
Gargett and Partners  
John Bayton

## Abstract

As recent as 1955, cathedrals were still unbuilt or incomplete in the young and developing dioceses of the Global South, including in Queensland, the Northern Territory and New Guinea. The lack of an adequate cathedral was considered a "reproach" over a diocese. To rectify this, the region's Bishops sought out the best architects for the task – as earlier Bishops had before them – engaging architects trained abroad and interstate, and with connections to Australia's renown ecclesiastical architects. They also progressed these projects remarkably fast, for cathedral building. Four significant cathedral projects were realised in Queensland during the 1960s: the completion of St James' Church of England, Townsville (1956-60); the extension of All Souls' Quetta Memorial Church of England, Thursday Island (1964-5); stage II of St John's Church of England, Brisbane (1953-68); and the new St Monica's Catholic, Cairns (1965-8). During this same era Queensland-based architects also designed new Catholic cathedrals for Darwin (1955-62) and Port Moresby (1967-69). Compared to most cathedrals elsewhere they are small, but for their communities these were sizable undertakings, representing the "successful" establishment of these dioceses and even the making of their city. However, these cathedral projects had their challenges. Redesigning, redocumenting and retendering was common as each project questioned how to adopt (or not) emergent ideas for modern cathedral design. Mid-1960s this questioning became divisive as the extension of Brisbane's St John's recommenced. Antagonists and the client employed theatrics and polemic words to incite national debate. However, since then these post-war cathedral projects have received limited attention within architectural historiography, even those where the first stage has been recognised. Based on interviews, archival research and fieldwork, this paper discusses these little-known post-war cathedrals projects – examining how regional tensions over tradition and modern ideas arose and played out.

## Introduction

1. Lisa Marie Daunt, "Communities of faith: Modern church architecture in Queensland, 1945-1977" (PhD thesis, UQ, 2021), 3, 736. <https://doi.org/10.14264/916e7f3> This paper is based on archival research collated from collections held in the University of Queensland's Fryer Library (henceforth UQFL); the Anglican Church's Diocese of North Queensland Archives and Research Centre, Townsville (henceforth ANQDA); the Anglican Southern Queensland Archdiocese Records and Archive Centre, Brisbane (henceforth ASQAA); and the Catholic Cairns Diocese archive (henceforth CCDA).

2. Daunt, "Communities of Faith," 258-593.

3. Peter Hammond, *Liturgy and Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1960), 6, 31-33, 91, 148 and 167. For example: Liverpool Catholic Cathedral, GB (1960-67) by Fredrick Gibbard; Bristol Catholic Cathedral, GB (1973), by Percy Thomas Partnership; San Francisco Cathedral, US (1963-1970) by Pietro Belluschi and Pier Luigi Nervi. A recent paper on two these is: Robert Proctor, "Uncertainty and The Modern Church: Two Roman Catholic Cathedrals in Britain," in Vladimir Kuli, Timothy Parker, Monica Penick and Frederick Steiner. *Sanctioning Modernism: Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014, 113-138. Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.

4. Peter and Linda Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 95.

5. The region's other denominations (mostly Protestant) do not appoint bishops nor consecrate the largest/principal church in a territory as a cathedral.

6. See: Brain Andrews, *Australian Gothic; The Gothic Revival in Australian Architecture from the 1840s to the 1950s* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne University Press), 2001.

7. There is now 5 Catholic and 3 Anglican Cathedrals, with the former missionary diocese of Carpentaria's cathedral now a church. In 1996 Carpentaria absorbed into the diocese of North Queensland. In Queensland there is also two Apostolic cathedrals and one Orthodox cathedral. In August 1981 the CofE in Australia was renamed the 'Anglican Church of Australia' – formalising the 1962 legal break from England. For this paper CofE is used.

8. For maps of see: Daunt, "Communities of Faith," 111 and 112.

9. Daunt, "Communities of Faith," 107, 125, 176, 272, 441.

During the post-war decades (1945-75) over 1350 churches were built in Queensland, with the 1960s witness to a genuine modern church building boom.<sup>1</sup> From the late-1950s church designs in the state increasingly adopted emergent ideas for modern church design.<sup>2</sup> Around this same time new cathedrals abroad (particularly the St Michael's Cathedral in Coventry (1951-61), Great Britain (GB), by Basil Spence) ignited much debate as to how cathedral design needed to assume modern architecture and liturgical renewal too.<sup>3</sup>

By definition a "cathedral is simply the church with the bishop's throne (cathedra) [...] A cathedral is normally, but not always, the largest church in the diocese".<sup>4</sup> The Church of England (CofE) and the Catholic Church both appointed Bishops to lead each diocese, building one cathedral per diocese, which was typically located in the prominent city of these Church defined territories.<sup>5</sup> During the nineteenth-century Australia's CofE and Catholic bishops commissioned landmark neo-gothic stone cathedrals, taking inspiration from those of GB.<sup>6</sup> However, while the dioceses of the country's southern states had substantially complete cathedrals by World War Two (WWII), this was not so in Queensland and the adjoining territories (nor Western Australia).

In 1955 Queensland had five small cathedrals, as well as three incomplete and one proposed.<sup>7</sup> The CofE's Province of Queensland was then divided into five dioceses, with Carpentaria including North Queensland, the Northern Territory (NT), and New Guinea was the fifth diocese. The Catholic Church in Queensland was also divided into five dioceses (as now).<sup>8</sup> From 1955 the Churches' building programmes gained momentum – with the most adherents belonging to the two most prolific builders, which were the CofE and Catholics<sup>9</sup> – and the region's Catholic and CofE Bishops initiated four significant cathedral projects, as well as others in NT and New Guinea. The Queensland-based architects engaged for these projects were Lund Hutton Newell, Black and Paulsen; A. Ian Ferrier (1928-2000); Reverend John Bayton (b.1930); and A.H. Conrad and T.B.F. Gargett Architects, who arguably took on the highest profile and most controversial (stage II of St John's Anglican, in Brisbane). As this paper details, these architects were commissioned as they were some the region's most prominent ecclesiastical architects. With training and connections both interstate and abroad, and an eagerness to engage with the region's climate and limited economic means, they were each also eager to rise to the challenges of "modern" cathedral design.

However, the region's post-war cathedral projects revealed tensions between long held tradition, and emergent ideas for both modern architecture and religious renewal. Cathedral design represented tradition and the desire to realise (or achieve) certain religious authority through their architectural design (through grand landmarks) was important to the region's Bishops. While the continuation of tradition persisted, there was also the call to build for the future and embrace emergent modern ideas. Invariably the region's post-war cathedrals had to find a balance between tradition and modern. How this balance was struck varied markedly. As this paper will reveal the region's ecclesiastical architecture could have been so much the poorer now,

had “modern” architectural ideas been assumed without question or nuance, and truly unique opportunities not been embraced.

### Progressing the Region’s Incomplete Cathedrals Post-WWII

In 1954, the newly appointed CofE North Queensland Bishop Ian Shevill (1917–1988, Bishop 1953–1970) arrived in Townsville to an incomplete cathedral. Soon after he launched a building crusade and a £100,000 War Memorial Appeal Fund for the completion of his cathedral and new permanent churches, under the banner “Builders for Christ”.<sup>10</sup> The success of this campaign saw £145,000 raised and many of the diocese’s building projects completed during the late-1950s and early-1960s.<sup>11</sup> In 1955 he convened the Cathedral Chapter, for the first time in the twentieth-century, setting the task of completing Townsville’s cathedral.<sup>12</sup>

The first stage of St James’ CofE Cathedral, Townsville (1887–1892) was designed by Arthur (1848–1929) and Cyril Blacket (1857–1937), continuing the practice of their father, Edmund Thomas Blacket (1817–1883) who was widely recognised as Australia’s main practitioner of “correct” Gothic. F<sup>13</sup> The initial scheme was stone – their preferred cathedral material – but to reduce cost it was significantly redesigned and pared-back to brickwork.<sup>14</sup>

In 1956 the Melbourne-based architect Louis Reginald Williams (1890–1980) – a known admirer of Blacket – was commissioned to design stage II of St James’ Cathedral. The architect for various inter-war CofE churches, as well as alterations and additions to several cathedrals, Williams was then “Australia’s most recognised Church of England architect.”<sup>15</sup> The diocesan architects, Ford Hutton Newell, Black and Paulsen, a Brisbane and Townsville-based practise, subsequently documented and supervised Williams’ design. The completed cathedral was opened for worship June 12, 1960 (Figure 1). This Queensland collaboration suited Williams. During the late-1930s the Melbourne-trained Peter Edward Newell (1916–2010) was Williams’ apprentice. Following Newell’s relocation to Brisbane, Williams referred his Queensland clients to Newell’s practice and recommended them to Shevill for the role of diocesan architects.<sup>16</sup>

St James’ stage II extended the cathedral’s nave, took its seating capacity to 769, provided a front façade and entry to the cathedral as well as a bell tower.<sup>17</sup> The details of the new nave bays largely replicated the Blacket design. However, various modern elements, in particular the lower-level windows with their cast ventilation grilles and the transepts exterior re-entrant corners provide discerning clues to identify the post-war from the nineteenth-century works.<sup>18</sup> The front façade and bell tower are clearly modern architectural statements, even though similar bricks were used as the first stage. Erwin Albert Guth’s (b.1926) sculpture “The statue of St James” is proudly mounted to the left side of this front façade. Mosaic tiles shimmer within the entry’s recessed archway. While the cathedral’s interior continued many of the Blacket details with only subtle modern adjustments, the front façade and statue express more modern architectural and artistic idioms. This approach was strongly supported by Shevill, who prioritised the completion of the

10. E.C. Rowland, *The Tropics for Christ: Being a history of the Diocese of North Queensland* (Townsville: Diocese of North Queensland, 1960), 83-4; *Centenary Book, The Diocese of North Queensland, 1878-1978* (Townsville: The Diocese of North Queensland, 1978), 44-57; Ian Shevill, *Half Time* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press Pty Ltd, 1966), 68.

11. *Centenary Book*, 16.

12. “Cathedral,” *The Northern Churchman*, September 1, 1960, 5; “Saint James’ Cathedral, a portfolio of drawings photographs and notes on the occasion of the consecration of the cathedral. 24 June 1978,” unpaginated (ANQDA).

13. Hector Abrahams, “Blacket, Edmund,” in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, eds. Philip Goad and Julie Willis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 87-9.

14. “Saint James’ Cathedral”.

15. Abrahams, “Blacket, Edmund,” 89; Gladys Marie Moore, “Louis Reginald Williams,” vol.1 (Master’s thesis, University of Melbourne, 2001), 22, 115-117. He would also design St Boniface Cathedral, Bunbury (WA, 1960-62) with Robert Blatchford; complete the third and final stage for Holy Trinity Cathedral, Wangaratta (VIC) in 1965; and design the replacement All Saints Cathedral, Bathurst (NSW, 1971).

16. Moore, “Louis Reginald Williams,” i, 16, 22, 117 and 149; John Maidment, “Williams, Louis R.,” in Goad and Willis, *Encyclopedia*, 765; Bruce Paulsen interviewed by Don Watson and Janina Gosseye, September 12, 2012 <https://qldarch.net/architect/interview/2561?architectId=132> accessed May 18, 2021). The two practices would also work together to complete St Andrew’s CofE, Lutwyche (1958-60). Williams likely recommended them for St John’s CofE, Carins (1960s works) and St Matthew’s CofE Mundingburra (1957) having himself previously worked with both these congregations.

17. Undated drawing “St James Cathedral Seating plan” (ANQDA).

18. Visit to the cathedral June 11, 2018, accompanied by Allan Bell; Allom Lovell Pty Ltd, “St James Cathedral Townsville a Conservation Plan for The Anglican Diocese of North Queensland,” 1998, 9-10.



19. "Dedication of the War Memorial church of S. Matthew's, Mundingburra," *The Northern Churchman*, April 1, 1957, 3.

cathedral over a slower and more costly build in keeping with the Blacket design. Indeed, Shevill was an advocate for modern architecture and art, expressing on various occasions his desire for twentieth-century churches for twentieth-century people.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 1: St James Church of England Cathedral, Townsville (1892 stage 1 and 1960 stage 2), designed by Louis R Williams, documented and supervised by Ford Hutton Newell, Black and Paulsen. Left: Exterior photograph of the front façade, by Lisa Daunt, 2018. Right: Interior photograph, looking back down the stage 2 nave to the front door, by Lisa Daunt, 2018.

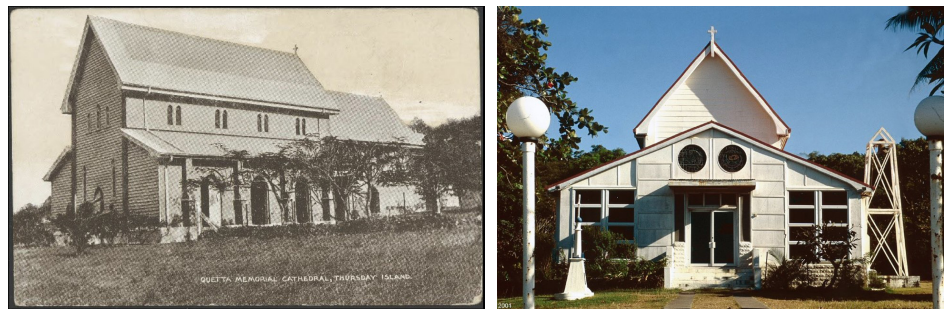


Figure 2: All Souls' Quetta Memorial Cathedral, Thursday Island (1893 and 1965 extension), designed by Rev. John Bayton. Left: ca.1919 photographic postcard (Thursday Island postcard collection, PIC/8808/16 LOC Album 1055 <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-148874321/view> accessed April 4, 2020). Right: 2001 Exterior photograph (photographer: Heritage Branch, Queensland Government. QHR 602168, <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602168#> accessed May 3, 2019).

20. Known as All Souls and St Bartholomew's Cathedral Church and Quetta Memorial from 1965.

21. "Quetta Memorial Precinct," *Queensland Heritage Register* listing 602168 <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=602168> accessed May 29, 2021; John Bayton, *Cross over Carpentaria: being a History of the Church of England in Northern Australia, From 1865-1965* (Brisbane: W.R. Smith & Patterson Pty. Ltd., 1965), 68, 114.

22. Paul and Mark Trotter interviewed May 20, 2019; Don Watson, "Fulton, Charles," in Goad and Willis, *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, 264-5.

23. Bishop John Bayton interviewed March 13, 2019; April 18, 2019 email correspondence from Mark Trotter.

24. Bayton interviewed 2019. In the mid-1960s with Stephen Trotter he designed various churches for the Torres Strait Islands and mainland missions (*Fulton Trotter archive*). Bayton also designed St Luke's CofE, Kenilworth (1955); St Andrew's CofE, Longreach (1960), with Neville R Willis; and the octagonal-planned St John the Evangelist CofE in Parkhurst (the chapel for St George's Home for children, opened 1960, closed 1978).

Between 1964 and 1965 Thursday Island's All Souls' Quetta Memorial Cathedral (then the Bishop's seat in the CofE diocese of Carpentaria) was extended.<sup>20</sup> The first stage was designed by John Hingeston Buckeridge (1857-1934) in 1892, built of concrete and rendered to look like sandstone. It was opened in 1893 and became a cathedral in 1900 when the first Bishop was appointed for the newly formed diocese.<sup>21</sup> The 1960s extension designed by Bayton, added to the front and side of the cathedral, and increased its capacity from 110 to 200-seats (Figure 2). As an architectural student at Brisbane's Central Technical College (CTC) and then the University of Queensland (UQ), Bayton worked for Fulton Collin and Associates, a practice then led by Charles Fulton (1906-88), who was also the head of school at CTC.<sup>22</sup> Bayton graduated from the degree course in 1958. Concurrently he pursued his interests in theology and iconography, studying for the priesthood at St Francis Seminary (Milton, Brisbane), and was ordained as a CofE rector in 1957.<sup>23</sup> From 1954 Bayton designed various Queensland churches.<sup>24</sup> The extension of All Soul's was modest in design – in response to its remote tropical island location – it was easy to construct, used light-weight materials and incorporated operable windows for ventilation.

However, while modern these extensions gained little media attention and no mention in the Church's own Queensland periodical, *The Church Chronicle*.

25. Jonathan Holland, "The Past is a Foreign Country: A history of the Church of England in the Diocese of Brisbane, 1950-1970" (PhD Thesis, UQ, 2006), 363

In contrast the post-war extension of St John's CofE Cathedral, Brisbane, gained considerable media attention. Extended from 1955 to 1968 (stage II of three) the nave was increased in length and its capacity from 324 to 910-seats.<sup>25</sup>

26. *Yearbook of the Diocese of Brisbane, Province of Queensland, Anglican Church of Australia, 2016*, vol.II (Brisbane, Diocesan Registry, 2016), 12-13.

Stage I of St John's had started on site in 1906 and was consecrated in 1910 with only the first bay of the nave realised and a temporary brickwork wall constructed to secure the building. The highly regarded English architect John Loughborough Pearson (1817-1897) and his son Frank (1864-1947) received the commission in 1886, remaining in GB, preparing the drawings from their established office there (neither able to visit in person).<sup>26</sup>

27. Holland, "The Past," 52-3, 362-3, 367. The Wells Way was the coined phase for church building fundraising campaigns facilitated by the Wells Organisation, which operated in Queensland 1959-1974.

In 1954 Archbishop Reginald Charles Halse (1881-1962, Archbishop 1943-1962) initiated a fund-raising appeal following Queen Elizabeth's visit that same year. She also encouraged Archbishop Philip Nigel Strong (1899-1983; Archbishop 1963-70) to complete this next stage during her 1963 visit. Strong considered the incomplete cathedral a "reproach" over the archdiocese. In 1963 the diocese was in a strong financial position (free of debt), care of the diocese's adoption of the Wells Way. Inspired by both Coventry Cathedral and the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul at Dogura, New Guinea (1939), which he had already overseen, Strong progressed St John's next stage.<sup>27</sup>

28. Robert Riddel, ed., *Conrad Gargett: 1890-2015* (Brisbane: Conrad Gargett, 2017), 115.

Early-1953 Halse had commissioned the cathedral and diocesan architects, A.H. Conrad and T.B.F. Gargett Architects, to document the cathedral's next three bays.<sup>28</sup> The foundations and floor slabs were poured 1955-56 but works on site stop there.<sup>29</sup> Then in 1960 Peter Robertson Gargett (1932-2014), who joined the practice in 1957, travelled Europe for research, visiting at least twenty-seven cathedrals, including those of Durham, Exeter, Liverpool and Pearson's Truro Cathedral (1880-1910). In 1961 Gargett restructured the project's (already prepared) documentation, splitting them into five separate contracts: stonework; steelwork; electrical; roof tiling; building and miscellaneous.<sup>30</sup> Gargett subsequently led the project under the direction of Arnold Henry Conrad (1887-1979) and his father Thomas Brenan Femester (Bren) Gargett (1898-1975).

29. A.H. Conrad and T.B.F. Gargett, certificate certifying the completion of the foundations, September 4, 1956; Peter R Gargett, "Talk to the Fine Arts Group of the Brisbane Club," February 20, 1994, 7 (ASQAA, St John's Cathedral file). The SOD ceremony was held August 21, 1955.

30. Peter Gargett, October 9, 1988, Memo to Denis Fulcher, 1-2; Peter Gargett, February 20, 1992 letter to the Most Reverend Peter Hollingworth, 1 (ASQAA, St John's Cathedral file).

31. Holland, "The Past," 363-6.

However, debate surrounding Coventry Cathedral – and diocese's investment in new "modern" church-buildings like St Lucia's Christ Church (1962) by Ronald Voller (1915-2006) and Cunnamulla's St Alban's (1963) by Lund Hutton Newell, Black and Paulsen; and in Northern Queensland the completion of Townsville's St James' Cathedral in 1960 (discussed above) – begged the question: should the cathedral be completed as a modern extension, in response to contemporary times and to reduce costs? Within the diocesan synod many also thought funds should be given to missionary work in locations abroad, experiencing poverty and misery, not spent unduly on the cathedral.<sup>31</sup> These ideas were resisted by the project's team. Alongside Strong's rational the 1965 diocesan *Yearbook* also recorded Gargett's position:

32. "Extensions to St John's Cathedral, Brisbane," *Yearbook of the Diocese of Brisbane* 1965, 137.

the interior of this Cathedral has the reposed and dignified atmosphere of sacredness [...] and its qualities will be enhanced [...] by the proposed extensions. [...] It is more than likely that St John's will be the last Gothic style cathedral to be built in the world. If it is to be finished, it must be in accordance with Frank L. Pearson's design, of over sixty years ago, to which we are committed.<sup>32</sup>

33. *Cross-Section* no.146 (December 1964), 1.

However, their commitment had already gained criticism within the architectural profession at a national level. In December 1964 *Cross-Section* criticised the lack of endeavour, describing the tender process as a "protracted agony", concluding "The church architects have lost touch".<sup>33</sup> When *Cross-Section* published an image of the steel structure in December 1965, the periodical remained highly critical, particularly of the project's forecast cost:

34. *Cross-Section* no.158 (December 1964), 1.

The steel frame was almost entirely erected in one day. The stonework which will clad the frame in a manner to match the neo-Gothic existing sections of the cathedral is expected to take three years to complete. At a cost of £650,000 for 50 squares of nave, i.e. £12,000 per square, this surpasses even Sydney Opera House figures.<sup>34</sup>

The question of traditional versus modern architecture also gained the Australian media's attention. As Gargett shared, in 1994:

35. Gargett, "Brisbane Club," 5-6.

During the 50s & 60s there were many claiming that the cathedral should be completed in a modern style. [...] I recall an item on an ABC TV programme in which an architect advancing this theory, confronted the Diocesan Registrar, Rowland St John. The next segment was an interview with Barry Humphries and on being asked his opinion, he replied in a voice that only Barry Humphries could use, saying that maybe those who were of this opinion, would like to see a laminex altar so that it could be cleaned with a wettex and possibly plastic vases of foam rubber glads on the altar.<sup>35</sup>

36. Gargett, "Brisbane Club," 5-6.

Purportedly the Diocesan Dean, Bill Baddeley (1914-1998), had "worded up" Humphries and was also in contact with Sir John Betjeman – the English Poet Laureate, architectural author and admirer of Pearson's architecture – who was offering his support and ready to fly to Brisbane at his own expense.<sup>36</sup>

However, the media theatrics from both sides, belies the detailed assessments already undertaken by the consultancy team and client for numerous technical and aesthetic challenges, nearly a decade earlier. To the extent that if accepted unchecked the media narrative obscures for architectural historiography today what were highly considered design decisions that recognised what was at stake – the truly unique opportunity and the challenge to complete Pearson's design. Archival research reveals that this opportunity underpinned the team's decisions, and even the introduction of the steel frame. In fact, it would be naïve to suggest that the steel frame was a modern material and technology used for "modern" reasons.

37. A.H. Conrad and T.B.F. Gargett letter to The Registrar, "St. John's Cathedral – Completion," July 9, 1954, 1-2 (ASQAA, St John's Cathedral file); Gargett, Memo, 3; Denzil Scrivens, *A Queensland Masterpiece: St John's Cathedral Brisbane and architect John Loughborough Pearson RA* (Brisbane: St John's Cathedral, 2017), 148.

38. "Extensions to St. John's Cathedral, Brisbane," October 19, 1965, 2-3.

39. A.H. Conrad and T.B.F. Gargett letter to The Registrar, "St. John's Cathedral Completion," September 6, 1954, 1-4 (ASQAA, St John's Cathedral file)

40. Conrad, Gargett & Partners, "St. John's Cathedral Brisbane, Contracts for Extensions, Progress Report No. 4," October 13, 1965.

41. Gargett, "Brisbane Club," 6.

42. "Extensions to St. John's, Brisbane," 3; Gargett, "Brisbane Club," 7; report append to October 20, 1965 letter from A.H. Conrad T.B.F. Gargett letter to The Registrar, "Extensions to St. John's Cathedral, Brisbane," October 19, 1965, 1 (ASQAA, St John's Cathedral file).

43. Gargett, "Brisbane Club," 11. November 21, 1965 the Start-of-Building Service was held ("Historic Day at the Cathedral," *The Church Chronicle*, December 1, 1965, 10).

The project's structural engineer, Russell John (Jack) McWilliam (1894–1991) of McWilliam and Partners was sceptical of the self-supporting stone vaulting as built in the early-1900s (the East end) to Pearson's design. From July 1954, McWilliam insisted on a steel frame structure, to avoid increasing the size of the stone buttresses (determined to be undersized) and avoid visible changes to Pearson's design.<sup>37</sup> This hidden steel also incorporated steel trusses, concealed in the roof space, to overcome difficulties in sourcing the large sizes of timber used in the first stage and avoid issues of timber shrinkage.<sup>38</sup> The gravitas of the decision to introduce the "modern" steel frame was recognised by the team. McWilliam worked in consultation with the project's Geologist, Frederick William Whitehouse (1900-1973). Also, in 1954, Conrad and Gargett invited architectural advice from University of Queensland Professor and architect Robert Cummings (1900-1989).<sup>39</sup> The two-bay steel frame was fully erected early-October 1965.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of experienced stone masons and the projected cost of the work caused a reduction in the scope from three-bays to two – a potential reduction the team had actually factored into their 1950s documents.<sup>41</sup> This led to the stoneworks being tendered twice, with Lowther Portland Pty Ltd's subsequent bid only accepted after they organised a joint venture with The Stone Firms Ltd. to bring a team from Birmingham, GB, to Brisbane for the works.<sup>42</sup> November 8, 1965, the first stone was laid. As the works progressed, St John's stage II continued to receive criticism from various commentators, but the last stone was laid January 22, 1968 and the project consecrated November 22, later that same year.<sup>43</sup> A modern but temporary wall of light-weight construction was built to secure the cathedral (Figure 3). Finishing stage III would take even more time and determination – the use of steel framing as opposed to load bearing stone vaulting would again be questioned (with steel framing installed, but as the stonework progressed under new masons and new architectural supervision that steelwork was gradually removed). Starting in 1989 stage III was completed and consecrated October 29, 2009.





Figure 3: St John's Church of England Cathedral, Brisbane, War Memorial extension works (1910 stage I, 1968 stage II extension), by Conrad, Gargett and Partners. Top Left: November 21, 1965 photograph of steel framing, photographer unknown. Top Right: 1968 photograph of temporary west wall, photographer unknown. <https://www.anglicanchurchsq.org.au/archives/cathedral-exhibition> accessed June 26, 2021. *Reproduced with the permission of the Records and Archives Centre, Anglican Church Southern Queensland.* Bottom: Photographs of the stage II bays, by Lisa Daunt 2021.

### Progressing the Region's Unbuilt Cathedrals Post-WWII

While the post-war stages of the region's incomplete CoFE cathedrals revealed tensions between tradition and emergent ideas for modern architecture, architectural style drew less debate as three new Catholic cathedrals were constructed in the region (though St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral in Rockhampton remained incomplete until 1981-82). With no existing part cathedral, community and architectural opposition was negligible. Instead, these debates occurred privately, between architect and Bishop, with the latter's ambitions determining how modern both the architecture and liturgical arrangement of the final design became. Printed press at the time focused on the achievement of building a cathedral and fund-raising campaigns. This was in part due to the

singular authority delegated to the cathedral's Bishop by the Catholic Church (as typically given to a church's Priest), as opposed to the building committees set-up for CofE projects.

44. On Ferrer see: Lisa Daunt, "Quoting Ian Ferrier (1928-2000): Contributing to Queensland's post-war modern church architecture," in *Quotation, Quotation*, proceedings of SAHANZ 34 (Canberra: SAHANZ, 2017), 101-111.

The design architect for all three new cathedrals was Ferrier, who had studied architecture at McGill University in Canada (1946-52), before migrating to Australia mid-1953 and arriving in Brisbane February 1955.<sup>44</sup>

45. David Bridgman, "St Mary's Star of the Sea War Memorial Cathedral," in *Australian Modern: Architecture, landscape & design*, Hannah Lewi and Philip Goad, eds. (Port Melbourne: Thames & Hudson Australia Pty Ltd, 2019), 142-3.

Ferrier's first ecclesiastical design was St Mary of the Sea Catholic Cathedral, Darwin (1962, NT), which he designed and started the documentation of in 1956-57, while he was working for the Brisbane practice of J.P. Donoghue, Cusick and Edwards, a practice by then known for its ecclesiastical buildings.<sup>45</sup> This was one of the most adventurous modern buildings drafted on a Queensland drawing-board during the late-1950s with its expressive use of true parabola arches (Figure 4). When interviewed in 1999, Ferrier, fondly recalled:

46. Fiona Gardiner and Alice Hampson, *Interview with Ian Ferrier*, St Lucia: May 30, 1999.

I then got involved in the Darwin Cathedral, what happen there was that the Bishop came to see him [Donoghue], he wanted a new cathedral. And one day for fun I sketched something up and he liked it and said well develop that for me. So, I did. The Bishop liked it. And away we went. Did the full set of working drawings, but at that stage I moved on somewhere else. [...] whilst I designed it and I did all the drawings for it, I wasn't there, I wasn't the architect in strict terms.<sup>46</sup>

47. *Edwards Bisset collection* UQFL242, job 286, folder 2. Earlier sketch designs were dated: April 1955 signed by Alan Amos; July 1955; September 1955; October 1955 initialled PABE (Philip Arthur Bryce Edwards).

However, designing a cathedral was not as straight forward as Ferrier's word suggest. Ferrier's design was not the first scheme John Patrick Donoghue (1894-1960) presented to Bishop John Patrick O'Loughlin (1911-85; Bishop of Darwin 1949-85), in fact numerous rough sketches had been prepared, and at least four prior designs drawn up.<sup>47</sup> These varied in their adoption of tradition and modern architecture. The October 1955 scheme was Romanesque, while the April 1955 scheme used angular forms and deep vertical sun blades to blend neo-Gothic form with modern detailing. Ferrier's design, while still adopting a cruciform plan and a neo-Gothic volume, modernised the construction method, taking cues from emergent ideas abroad. Oscar Niemeyer, Felix Candela and Pier Luigi Nervi had by then each designed reinforced-concrete parabolic arch buildings that were widely published. What Ferrier achieved for Donoghue and O'Loughlin was an inspiring design, celebrating modern construction, an opportunity they embraced and took on the challenges that ensued for it to be realised.



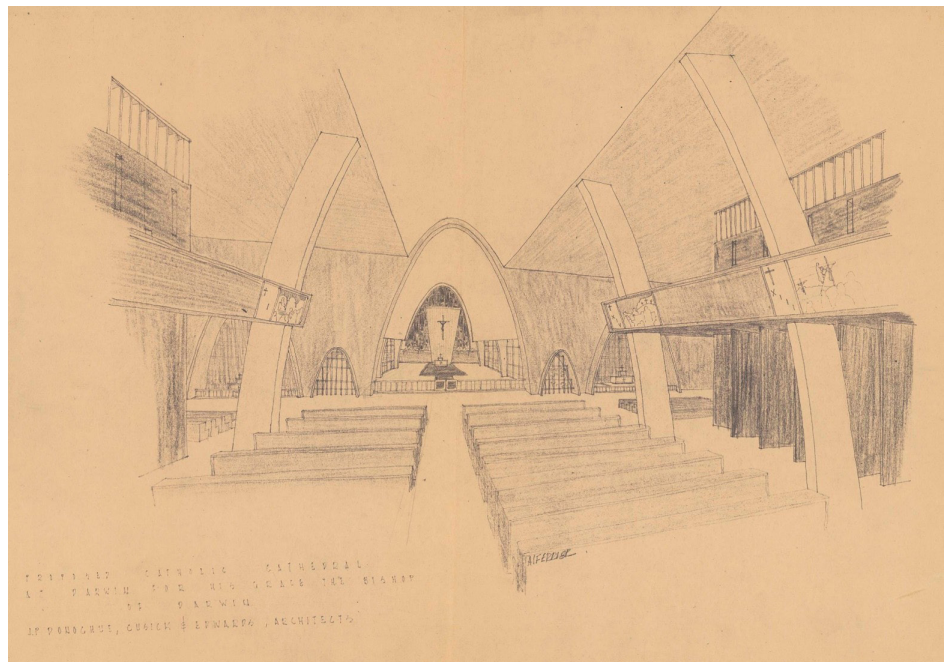
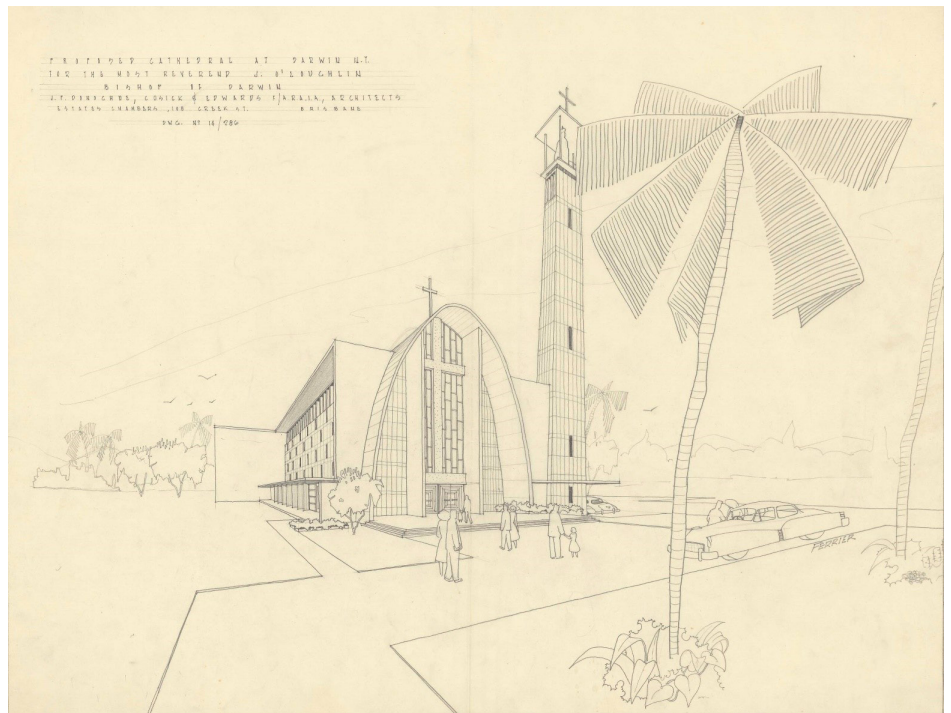


Figure 4: St Mary of the Sea Catholic Cathedral, Darwin, NT (1962) designed by A. Ian Ferrier of J.P. Donoghue, Cusick and Edwards. Left: Exterior perspective drawing (pencil on tracing), signed by by A. Ian Ferrier, undated. Right: Interior perspective drawing (paper print of pencil drawing), signed by A. Ian Ferrier, undated. *Edwards Bisset collection* UQFL242, job 286, folder 2

Ferrier's design was a challenging project to document, tender and build (though different to the challenge of St John's, discussed above). Ferrier produced 'revised' documents July 1957, before he left Donoghue to start his own practice. The documents were later redrawn, with some design changes, during the first half of 1958. Interestingly, during September 1958 the project's structural engineers – Woolcott, Hale, Bond & Corlett (North Sydney) – prepared an alternative scheme with reinforced-concrete parabolic walls and roof structure. However, the project's structural engineering was completed as documented

48. UQFL242, job 286 – superseded engineers' drawings in folder 1 of 2.

early-1958 with the parabolic arches fabricated as steel frames encased in concrete and the roof constructed with beams and purlins covered in corrugated copper sheeting. The rest of the structure is a combination of concrete slabs, beams and columns, steel frames, blockwork and local porcellanite stone-clad walls.<sup>48</sup> In response to Darwin's tropical climate, custom-designed concrete brise-soleils (sun-breakers) shade the high-level nave windows and the transept windows. The nave side walls open at low-level with glazed doors incorporated along the length of the nave for cross-ventilation (a recurrent feature of Ferrier's ecclesiastical designs). However, departing most from Ferrier's design was the tower, which was repeatedly redesigned and redocumented, with the built design finally drafted May 1961, during the construction phase.

49. On Holy Family see: Lisa Daunt, "Modernist Concrete: technologies of Brisbane church architecture in the 1960s," in *Historiographies of Technology and Architecture* proceedings of SAHANZ 35 (Wellington: SAHANZ, 2018), 78-92.

50. "Progress on the Darwin Memorial Cathedral," *The Catholic Leader*, April 23, 1959, 9.

No doubt St Mary's was a challenging build; however, the decision to proceed with a steel frame structure likely limited negative media during its construction (the Brisbane parish church of Holy Family, suggests how challenging a task a reinforced-concrete structure could have been).<sup>49</sup> Instead, the design was repeatedly celebrated. In a speech given on Australia Day 1959 – the occasion of Darwin formally becoming a capital city and shortly after cathedral's foundation stone ceremony of July 13, 1958 – Richard Charles Ward (1916-1977), the federal government member of Darwin, acknowledged the proposed cathedral for its contribution to this feat: "It is significant" he said "and perhaps not by accident, that a great Cathedral is going up in Smith Street. One established principle of right to city status is that of having a Bishop. Darwin has had one for some years and now it is soon to have a Cathedral."<sup>50</sup> April 1959 reporting on the Darwin cathedral's progress, Queensland's *The Catholic Leader* recognised its contemporary design as evidence of spiritual progress in the North:

51. "Darwin Memorial Cathedral," 9.

The inspiring contemporary design – in line with the best and most enduring in modern architecture – is an expression of faith in the great possibilities of the Territory of tomorrow. It is a guarantee for the future just as the Church as a whole has a vital role in shaping the modern world, so the Cathedral is a pledge that the Church in Darwin will be to the fore, guiding and directing development along lines in keeping with the best Christian traditions. The message from the majestic, uninterrupted sweep of the series parabolic arches will always be – Sursum corda! [Lift up your hearts!]<sup>51</sup>

St Mary's was blessed and opened August 19, 1962.

52. Bridgeman, "St Mary's Star of the Sea," 142-3; Philip Goad and Hannah Lewi, "Australian Modernism Top 10," *Pursuit*, The University of Melbourne, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/australian-modernism-s-top-10-part-two> accessed May 21, 2021.

St Mary's remains one Darwin's most celebrated buildings. Recently, it was recognised as landmark modern design, gaining a 2-page entry in the 2019 compendia *Australia Modern* and its inclusion in Philip Goad and Hannah Lewi's top ten Australian modern buildings.<sup>52</sup>



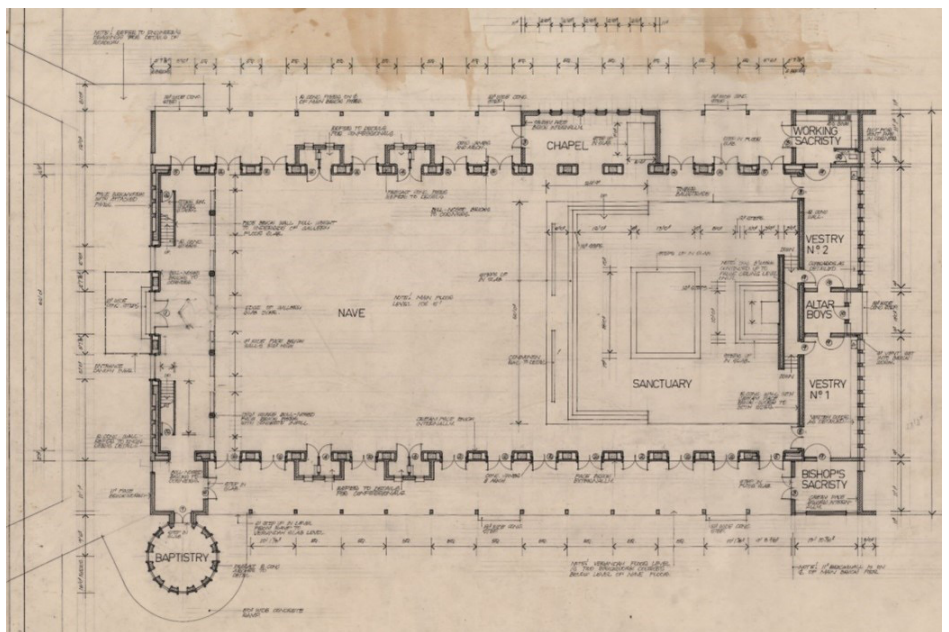


Figure 5: St Monica's War Memorial Catholic Cathedral, Cairns (1968), by A. Ian Ferrier. Top: Exterior photograph, by Lisa Daunt, 2018. Middle: The opening ceremony July 14, 1968, concelebrated mass (evening event), interior photograph. Ferrier Slide Collection, courtesy of Catherine Baudet. Bottom: The redocumented and built design, floor plan, December 1966 drawing. Ferrier Baudet Archive, courtesy of Catherine Baudet.

52. Bridgeman, "St Mary's Star of the Sea," 142-3; Philip Goad and Hannah Levi, "Australian Modernism Top 10," *Pursuit*, The University of Melbourne, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/australian-modernism-s-top-10-part-two> accessed May 21, 2021.

53. "St Monica's War Memorial Cathedral," *Queensland Heritage Register* listing 601961 <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=601961> accessed June 1, 2016.

54. Letters from Ferrier to Bishop Cahill, December 23, 1964; February 2, 1965; March 5, 1965 (CCDA, A300 St Monica's Cathedral Construction).

55. Archbishop O'Donnell's address August 9, 1966 (CCDA, Silver Jubilee of Diocese 1966 file A900 box 6 folder 1; and quoted in "Archbishop O'Donnell Officiates at Cairns Jubilee Ceremonies," *The Catholic Leader*, August 18, 1966).

56. "State News from all over Queensland," *The Courier-Mail*, July 28, 1966 (CCDA, A300).

57. Both visited by Ferrier. *Ferrier slide collection*.

58. August 1965 17, letter from Fr Lennon to Ferrier, Bishop's confirmation (CCDA, A300).

59. Cahill's review of May 6, 1966 working drawing set, sent to Ferrier with cover letter attached dated May 18, 1965 (CCDA, A300).

60. August and September correspondence between Ferrier and both Fr Lennon and Andrew L. Petrie Pty Ltd; then, April 11 and 24, 1968 letters Ferrier to Fr Lennon and Watkins (CCDA, A300).

During the mid-1960s Ferrier met the Bishop of Cairns and then the Archbishop of Port Moresby, leading to two cathedral commissions for his own practise. St Monica's Catholic Cathedral in Cairns was the first to open in 1968.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 5). Discussions between Bishop Thomas Vincent Cahill (1913-1978, Bishop of Cairns 1949-1967) and Ferrier commenced late-1964 and Ferrier produced initial sketch design early-1965.<sup>54</sup> With both Cahill and Ferrier collaborating for this project, the expectations of their peers were high – for instance, Patrick O'Donnell (1897-1980, Archbishop of Brisbane 1965-1973) spoke of Cahill at the twenty-five years Cairns diocese celebrations:

His opinions and judgements are valued and sought for in the councils of the Australian Hierarchy. His deep theological insights and his gift of languages proved a most valuable asset to the bishops of Australia during the recent Ecumenical Council. He was our liaison and contact with the hierarchies of Italy, Spain and central Europe. My Lord Bishop, that you have put your hand to the great work of erecting here a Cathedral worthy of the traditions of North Queensland, a monument to the pioneers who laid the foundations of the Church in this now prosperous region, is indeed typical of your zeal, your foresight, your faith in the future of the diocese over which you rule.<sup>55</sup>

During the tender period, *The Courier-Mail* published a photograph of the model with the caption: "The designer, Brisbane architect Mr A. Ian Ferrier has striven to relate contemporary architectural forms with the desired classical atmosphere for the building, which will provide for the requirements of the new liturgical forms."<sup>56</sup>

For this design, Ferrier took inspiration from a Canadian Synagogue (Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto (1938) by Jack Brenzel of John B. Perkins associates, and Coventry Cathedral's Unity Chapel.<sup>57</sup> In its final form, the cathedral's height is equivalent to a four-storey building, with tall pre-cast concrete arched windows containing ruby and amber coloured-glass to the front, sides and baptistry. Red (Mareeba) bricks were used externally contrasting the white concrete details and light cream (Brisbane) bricks internally to brighten the interior.<sup>58</sup> The wall behind the cathedra also used light cream brick, to not be a feature and therefore not distract from the altar.<sup>59</sup> In response to Cairns' tropical climate, verandahs ran the length of both sides, with doors off the nave at regular intervals for cross-ventilation, and the wall to roof junction was vented to realise heat. The cathedral's nave is wide and column free. The sanctuary measures approximately 50-feet (15.24 metres) square, taking up the front third of the worship space This generous sanctuary has an island altar for the Bishop to face the people and the cathedra on the back wall also facing the people. Ferrier designed the marble altar, and the majority of the liturgical furnishings.<sup>60</sup> However, Ferrier's proposals for commission artwork were dismissed. The stations of the cross and the wooden crucifix figure were purchased by the diocese from religious suppliers.



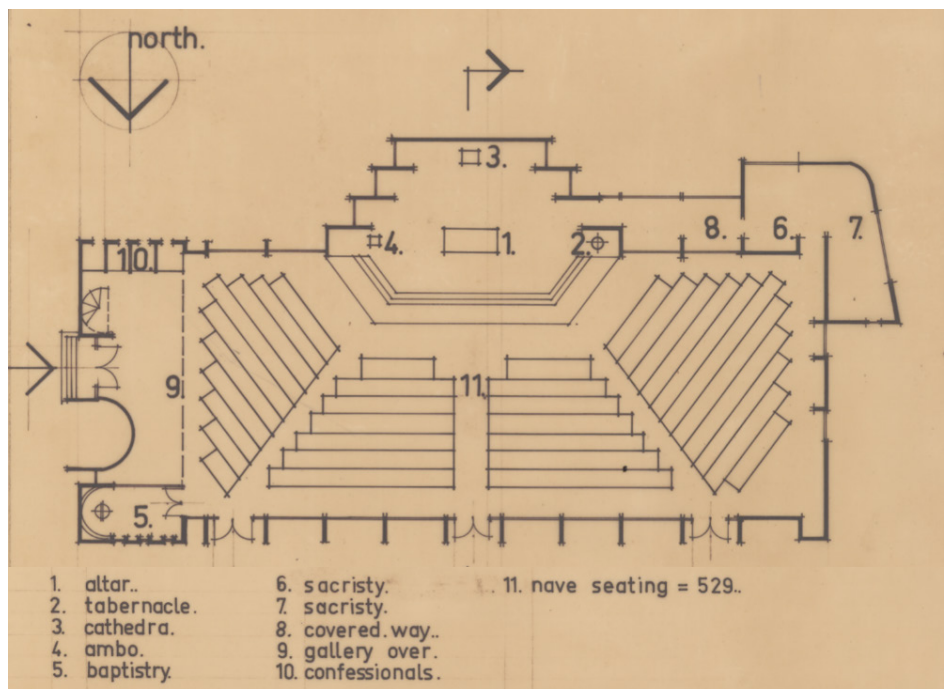
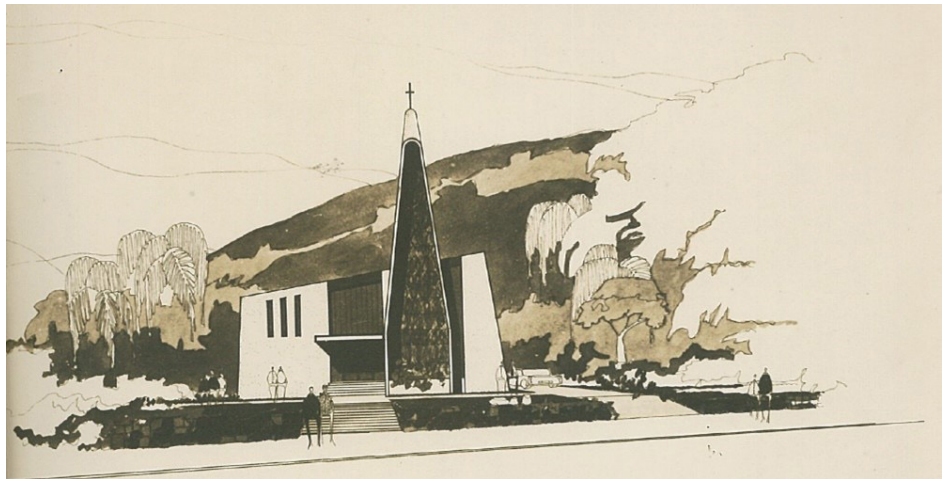


Figure 6: St Mary's Cathedral, Port Moresby, PNG (1969), by A. Ian Ferrier, in association with John R. Wild. Top and middle: The revised and built design's street elevation and floor plan, June 1968 drawings Ferrier Baudet Archive, courtesy of Catherine Baudet Bottom: Exterior photograph, by Dr. Stephen Long, 2016.

61. Gardiner and Hampson, *Interview with Ian Ferrier*.

In 1999, Ferrier's reflections on the building were mixed. He lamented the design features deleted due to budget constraints and Cahill's traditional preferences for art and architecture.<sup>61</sup> As a basilica-type and with a separate baptistry chapel, St Monica's does not show the same progressiveness evident in Ferrier's (smaller) church and chapel designs. Due to high first tender prices, Ferrier's office redocumented the 600-seat cathedral, without the transepts and with a simpler ceiling construction, amongst other adjustments.

The third cathedral that Ferrier designed was St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Port Moresby, PNG, design in 1967 in association with John Ralston Wild (1928-2014) who was based in Port Moresby. It was opened in 1969. (Figure 6). This cathedral is a unique and expressive juxtaposition of western catholic and indigenous local (male ceremonial hut, Haus Tambaran) architectures. And with the sanctuary positioned along a long wall of the nave the seating fans around the sanctuary – the planning expresses modern liturgical renewal of a participating gathered parish community. However, Ferrier's office also documented this cathedral twice (as they did for St Monica's), but in this instance the opportunity was taken to adopt a progressive liturgical ordering (it was initially documented as a basilica-type), while also building a smaller scheme.

## Conclusion

Progressing the 1960s stages of Queensland's incomplete cathedrals revealed tensions over traditional and modern ideas. Each of these cathedral's first stages were designed by eminent ecclesiastical architects and for each it was a question of how "modern" the 1960s extensions should be? While at the same time, if and how to adhere to the original architect's design. St James' Cathedral in Townsville (1960) was completed with a new modern front façade, but its new nave blends tradition and modern, with the former the dominant. In contrast, the remote Thursday Island All Soul's Quetta Memorial Cathedral extension (1965) used economic light-weight construction in direct contrast to its masonry 1893 part. St John's Cathedral stage II (1968) in Brisbane choose what ended up being the more challenging approach, keeping with the intent of Pearson's design, but hiding "modern" steel-framing within the stonework. Today Pearson's design is considered the finest in Australia and with the privilege of hindsight it is readily apparent now that it did need respect.

Unmistakably modern with its expressive use of parabolic arches, St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral in Darwin (1962) was a bold shift away from Romanesque and Gothic architecture traditions in the region. However, St Mary's design responded little to emergent ideas for liturgical renewal, leaving this task for a later time (as can be also said for the CofE cathedrals discussed in this paper). In contrast the new cathedrals built in Cairns (1968) and Port Moresby (1969) responded to liturgical renewal, with the latter also departing from the processional basilica and gathering the congregation around the sanctuary. These three new post-war cathedrals, though all designed by Ferrier, each display a quite different balancing of tradition and modern, as ideas for regional cultural expression, tropical architecture, liturgical renewal and



which continuing traditions were “needed” for a cathedral were debated between architect and Bishop.

All these cathedral projects were achieved remarkably fast, due to their small size and economic constraints (a very different narrative to the modern, highly symbolic, landmark cathedrals that were built abroad post-war in the established dioceses of the Global North). A priority for the region’s Bishops was “completed” cathedrals, as these young dioceses strove to establish and develop a breath of ecclesiastical infrastructures across their territories. This highly development driven outlook, enabled the region’s Bishops to reduce their ambitions and accept realistic, “municipal” scaled projects that adopted the emergent ideas of modern architecture (as opposed to the expensive and time-consuming ecclesiastical architecture of neo-Gothic designs). Arguably, together with the remarkable number of churches built, the region’s completed post-war cathedrals are emblematic of an ambition different from that of the nineteenth-century. A comparison particularly apparent, when the extraordinary ambition of the CofE client and architects to realise Pearson’s nineteenth-century design of St John’s is given due recognition.

*Acknowledgements: The award of the SAHANZ 2018 David Saunders Founder’s Grant funded travel to Far North Queensland. This paper began during Lisa’s doctoral research (University of Queensland). Select parts of her doctoral dissertation have been incorporated, reworked, expanded, and supplemented by further research. Janina Gosseye and Robert Riddel provided feedback as this paper was developed.*