

Places of worship

Loreto Convent Chapel, Mary's Mount

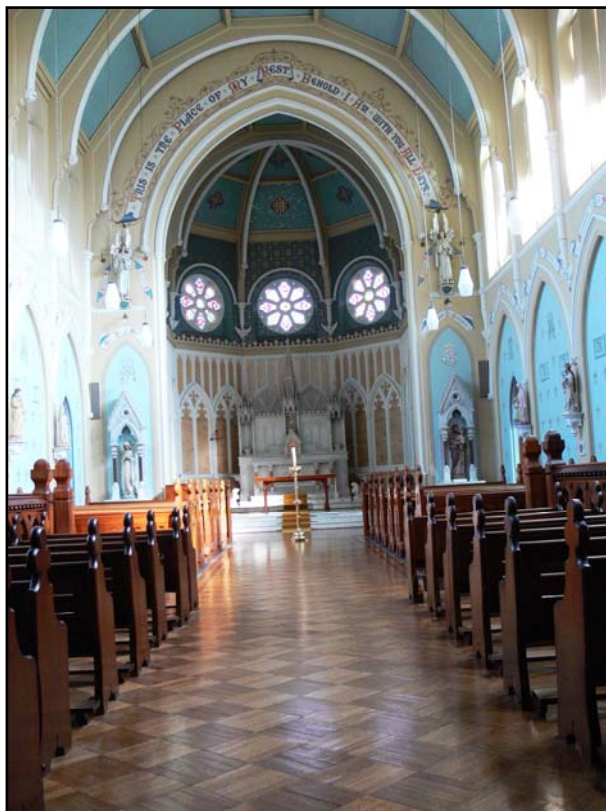
Sturt Street, Ballarat, Victoria

The convent chapel is of architectural significance as one of the largest and most elaborate convent churches in Victoria

Completed in 1902, the convent chapel or Church of the Immaculate Conception is of historical significance as a symbol of the faith and identity of the Loreto Sisters (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary) in Ballarat. The chapel was completed with a bequest from a German Countess, Countess Elizabeth Wolff-Metternich. The Countess suffered poor health and in a break from travelling the world, she spent some time living and teaching at the Loreto Convent Ballarat where she decided to enter the order. She returned to Europe to settle family and financial affairs but died, *en route*, leaving a large sum of money that was only released to the convent after special dispensation from Kaiser Wilhelm.



The convent chapel is of architectural significance as a well executed and essentially intact example of the work of the prominent firm of architects Reed, Smart and Tappin. It is stylistically comparable with the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Bendigo, Tappin's major work.



Above: Countess Elizabeth Wolff-Metternich
Left: Chapel interior



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Above: Chapel, with organ
Photo courtesy Organ Historical Society



Above left: Laying foundation stone, 1899

The chapel is constructed in Barrabool stone with Oamaru stone detailing and consists of a large and lofty clerestoried nave and a spacious apsidal sanctuary, all surrounded by an external ambulatory. The elaborate plastered and painted interior, recently restored, focuses upon a high marble altar surmounted by three rose windows placed above elaborate Gothic arcading.

The convent chapel represents a notable application of the use of decorative paintwork and stencilling, tessellated tile work (replaced by parquetry in 1930), and stained glass. The huge rose window, with glass by William Montgomery, is framed by the blue stencilled facade pipes of the divided organ built in 1903 by George Fincham & Son.

Restoration work on the chapel was begun in 1999. Again the bequest of a Loreto friend and past pupil, Lucy Kerley MBE, came to the rescue. Interior plaster and paintwork were restored and conservation work was undertaken on statues and artworks.



Above right: Sanctuary ceiling