

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

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Nathalia Kurrajong PRECINCT

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NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

LOCATION

Precinct Boundaries and Map

The Nathalia Kurrajong Precinct is bound to the north by Broken Creek and centred around Bromley Street, one of the original streets gazetted when Alfred Leahy first surveyed and gazetted the township of Nathalia in 1879. The town allotments area was bounded on the west by Blake Street and on the east by the Broken Creek. (See Figs 2 and 3) Further surveys in 1886 and 1889 enlarged the township.

The area within the boundary incorporates historically, socially, aesthetically and scientifically important places and views of Nathalia's water supply, Avenue of Honour, places of worship and historic residential places fronting the creek. These are illustrated on the map in Fig 1 and listed in Table 1.

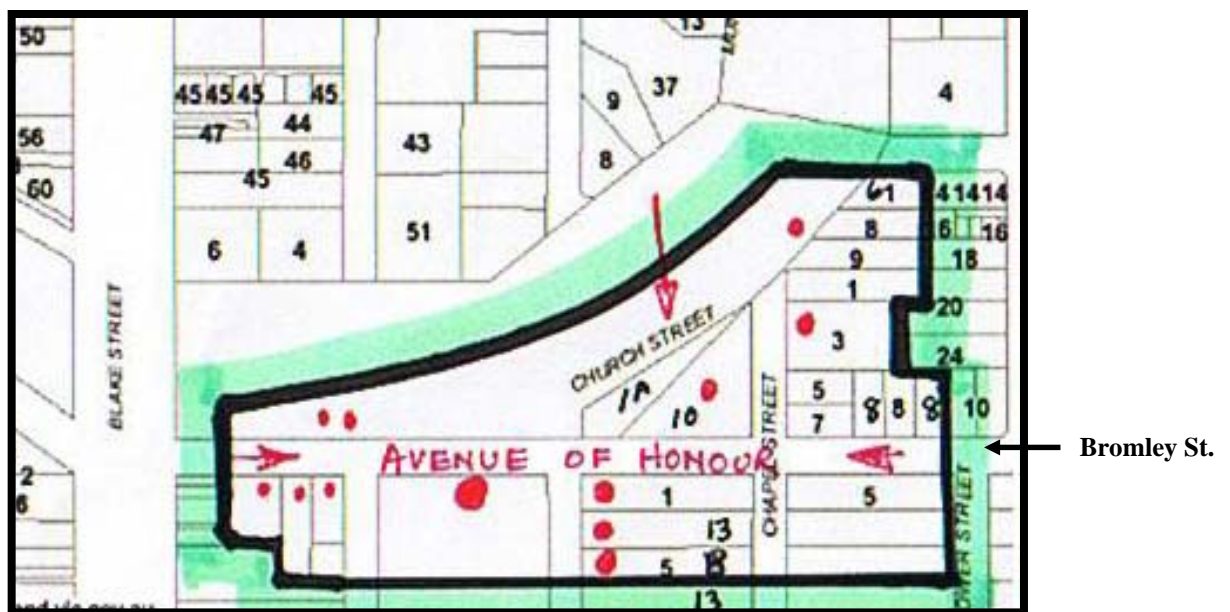


Fig. 1. Nathalia Kurrajong Precinct showing 12 significant sites and view lines, in red.
Source: Lorraine Huddle 2005.

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Table 1. List of culturally significant places, their location, DB number and historical context. .

<i>Period</i>	<i>Associated Historical Themes</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Extant Places within the Nathalia Kurrajong Precinct</i>	<i>Location</i>
Victorian 1880s to 1900	Early agricultural development; Expansion of Primary production Flourmills and commercial concerns.	1880s	Victorian weatherboard Houses	Bromley Street
		1882	Uniting (former Wesleyan) Church	Bromley Street
	Development of local institutions.	1882	Old School & teacher's residence	Bromley Street
		1891	Brick School Building	Bromley Street
	Infrastructure: Railways open 1888. Water Supply from Broken Creek	1892	Catholic Church	Robertson Street
		c1890s 1895 1906	Gigantic Moreton Bay Fig Trees. Victorian House	Bromley Street 3 Chapel Street
Federation 1900s-1914	Infrastructure: Water Reticulation, Electricity and Fire Brigade.	1908	Renovated Infant's Room (former teacher's house)	Bromley Street
Interwar 1920-30s		c. 1920]	Kurrajong Avenue of Honour	Bromley Street
		c. 1940	Catholic Presbytery with 4 rooms from an earlier Presbytery.	Robertson Street

Refer to Appendix 1 for a List with Photographs.

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Kurrajong Precinct incorporates a corner of the earliest historic centre of Nathalia, including the northern section of Richard Blake's Barwo Steam Saw Mill allotment and the built section of the state school gazetted in 1877. The main features of the precinct are the avenue of honour with its stately Kurrajong trees, the Uniting Church (formerly Wesleyan), Catholic Church and associated places and the old State School buildings with two associated houses.

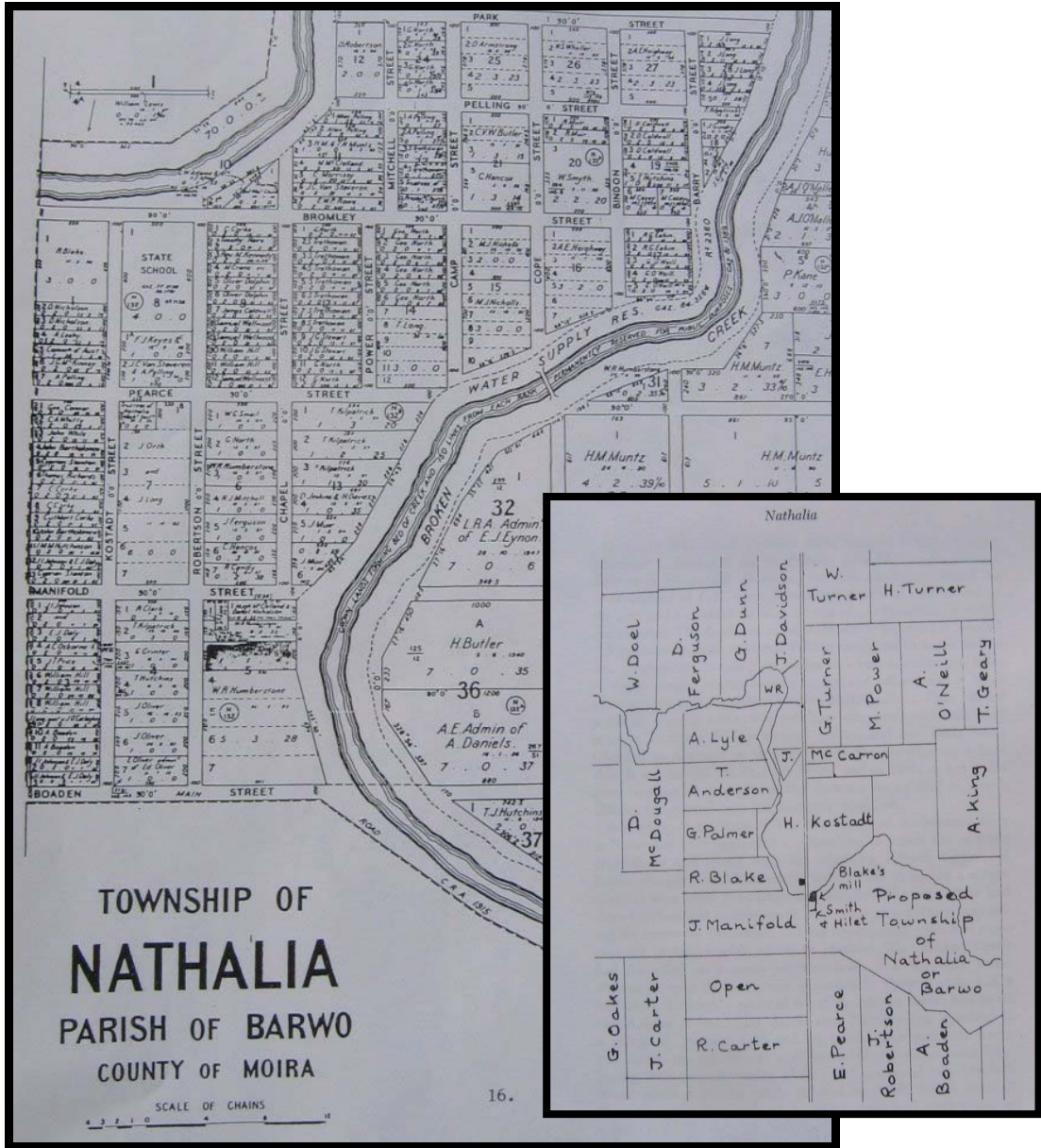


Fig 2 Map showing original 1879 township allotments east of Blake Street, which is on the far left of the map. Source: Nathalia Herald

Fig3. Inset. Map showing landowners in Nathalia area 1877. Source Hibbins.

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

The Kurrajong Precinct has thus been associated with the history of Nathalia from its inception, from the rapid development and land sales of the late 1880s in anticipation of the opening of the railway line. Initially the settlement and the first school, opened in 1877, were named Barwo, however the name Nathalia was gazetted in 1880 and the name of the school changed to Nathalia in 1882. The school was located in section 8 of the surveyed town and was gazetted for school use in 1877. The opening of the railway in 1888 provided a much anticipated boom for the town.

In April 1888 the *Nathalia Herald* announced that 'Anyone visiting our little township will be surprised at the number of buildings that are being erected and the character of these buildings proves at a glance that the days of the bark and log hut are passed.'¹ Nathalia began to feel the Depression in the following year however, with a fall in land sales and trouble for the banks as overseas capital and land speculation collapsed. Small, steady development continued however - by 1891 the population was 689 and by 1901 it was 828. The largest growth in population accompanied the post World War Soldier Settlement schemes in the area, from 954 in 1947 to 1,859 in 1961.²

In 1889 the Victorian Municipal Directory described Nathalia as a rising township with two bank branches, a school, a mechanics' institute, a large private hall, three churches, flour mills, two cordial factories, a printing office, four hotels, a number of shops and a railway line from Numurkah.³ This description is enlarged by the *Australian Handbook* of 1903 (extant buildings within Precinct in bold):

a post town, with money order and telegraph office and savings bank [...]
Hotels: Nathalia, Court House, Bridge, Farmers' Arms, and Railway. Banks:
Commercial, Australasia, and Victoria. Churches: Church of England,
Wesleyan, Presbyterian, and **Roman Catholic**. **State School (No. 2060)** and
one **private school**, flour-mill, butter factory, and even large stores [...]
Mechanics Institute, flourishing agricultural society ... Masonic, Oddfellow,
A.N.A and I.O.R. societies. Fire brigade and plant. [...] It is an agricultural and
pastoral district, and is one of the chief wheat and barley growing centres of the
state [...] The land is especially adapted for fruit growing, and a considerable
trade has sprung up in peaches, apricots and grapes [...] Water supply from
Broken River. Population 1,000; of district 1,500.⁴

As an agricultural town, the fortunes of Nathalia were inextricable from those of its farming communities, and the history of the town was particularly affected by droughts such as those of 1908 and floods such as that of 1887. During and after the Great War of 1914-18 no less than 39 families left the area because of droughts, explaining the relatively staid population growth in the early twentieth century.⁵

The Nathalia Irrigation League established in 1914 was unsuccessful in having existing and planned irrigation schemes extend to Nathalia and wheat continued to be the main produce from the area. The Nathalia region was forced to wait until 1951 for the construction of irrigation channels from the Murray-Goulburn scheme and the effect on the district was a 70% increase in population between the censuses of 1946 and 1961.⁶ The Kurrajong Precinct is thus also significant and earns its title through its association with every important period in the history of Nathalia both before and subsequent to the improved irrigation developments in the post war period.

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

The Great War of 1914-18 took a heavy toll on Nathalia, with 35 men from the district killed out of nearly 200 recruits in the area. The end of the conflagration in Europe brought both celebration and sadness, as well as hardship for returned soldiers and the families of those who had died or been injured. The avenue of honour was a typical tribute to the fallen, and each of the trees was given a plaque with a name of each of those men. Each of the Kurrajong trees in Bromley Street, whence the precinct's name is derived, was individually named.⁷

The exact age of the massive Moreton Bay Fig trees and Pepper trees is not known, but the first Australian Arbour Day was held in 1890, and Moreton Bay Fig Trees were planted in many public places at that time, so they may date from that year.



Fig 4. Important view looking east along the Broken Creek boundary of the Kurrajong Heritage Precinct. Note the large Moreton Bay Fig Tree and large number of gum trees lining the banks of the Creek and road. Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd. 2004



Fig 5 View east along Broken Creek showing the tree lined banks. Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd 2005

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Urban Design, Views and Foci

The most culturally significant view is the Avenue of Honour c.1920 (DB 1044) in Bromley Street. The thoughtful planting of over 20 Kurrajong trees both sides of the road by a grieving town population over 90 years ago, has created an aesthetically pleasing and shady avenue for later generations to enjoy.

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Fig 6 Great War Avenue of Honour, Bromley Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2005

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

Nathalia Kurrajong precinct has an irregular layout as it follows the curve of the creek, giving a significant visual effect. The extensive open space, grass and trees associated with the flow of the creek, create variable open views. The massive individual street trees, especially the Moreton bay figs are of considerable age and create strong landscape elements making a major contribution to the local townscape. Banks of the creek are lined with Gum trees and Moreton Bay Figs.

See Figs 4 and 5 for typical examples. The extant buildings are predominantly aligned at right angles with the rectangular allotments and road frontages but the triangular island allotment and siting of the Uniting (former Wesleyan) Church is an exception which creates a striking and pleasing visual contrast. These building and street alignments are an important part of this precinct's urban design and setting.

The views within and out of the precinct which incorporate Broken Creek and its banks are an important aesthetic contribution to the character as well as having historical importance for the role played by the Creek as the early source of water supply for the town and ongoing recreation uses.

The Uniting church allotment is bounded by Church Street which runs parallel to Broken Creek and from Church Street, Chapel Street and Bromley Street. It allows 360 degree picturesque views of the church within this precinct and from across the other side of Broken Creek.



Fig 7. A typical picturesque view of the Uniting Church, as seen from within and without the precinct. This photo is looking south from the other side of the Creek, in Kostadt Heritage Precinct. Note the importance of the background of predominantly space, trees and sky around the building in creating a strong picturesque setting for the delightful Gothic architecture of this building. Source. Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd. 2004

NATHALIA KURRAJONG PRECINCT

Culturally significant places

The precinct is made up primarily of religious places such as the Uniting Church, former Wesleyan Manse, the Catholic Church, Catholic presbytery and Grotto, and civic places including the State school, the Avenue of Honour and many important views in the public realm of the Creek, Avenue of Honour, and religious places. There are three Victorian era houses, one of which is the site of the first school in Nathalia.

State School No. 2060 Buildings (1891 & 1908) DB 1040

In 1882 a 'wooden school '30 x 18 x 14 feet' with an iron roof' was built, which later became a teacher's residence of much controversy for its 'meanness'. The handsome Federation style red brick building was opened in 1891, after the rolls had swelled to 149, crowded into a space designed for 50 to 60 pupils.⁹ The single storey red brick school with decorative bands of light cream bricks and timber fretwork in the gable ends, was thus associated with the rapid population growth of the 1880s and early 1890s. By 1900 the population of the town was over 700 and that of the Numurkah shire of which Nathalia then formed a part was over 7000. As early as 1886 the school attendance had reached 80. The smaller 'infant's room' was renovated out of the original 1882 school building in 1908 to relieve further crowding and partitioned into four rooms, with the addition of verandahs and a portico.¹⁰



Fig 8 Bromley St. Now known as 'Carinya', this was the site of the first school and teacher's residence. Photo Source: Lorraine Huddle Pty Ltd. 2004



Fig 9 The school rooms on Bromley Street. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

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Catholic Church (1892) and White Granite Grave DB 22. Presbytery and Grotto DB 1041



Fig 12. Catholic Church and White Granite Tombstone. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

The Catholic church with notable stained glass windows, was designed in the Gothic manner with a cast iron gallery by prolific local architect Allan MacDonald, and built by contractor T A; Neild for £1211¹¹ The white granite tombstone is in the grounds of the church, in a similar manner to one at the Catholic Church in Cobram.

The original timber Presbytery was built in the early twentieth century, but after a fire, four of those rooms were incorporated into the current brick building which was constructed in 1940 by builder W Tuttle from Numurkah.¹²



Fig 12. Catholic Presbytery and Grotto. Source: Lorraine Huddle 2004

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Uniting (former Wesleyan) Church (1890) DB 166 and Manse DB 1043



Fig. Uniting Church, Bromley Street, Nathalia.
Source: Lorraine Huddle. 2004

The first Methodist services in the region were held in private homes in Nathalia until a church was erected in Nathalia and Yielima in 1878. The Nathalia church was replaced by a brick church in 1882.¹³ The present church was opened in February 1890:

The new building was forty three feet by twenty four feet, with four mullion windows set into either side of the high timber roof. Worshipers could enter under a rose window framed in New Zealand stone.¹⁴ The apse has a roundel in the apex above a tripartite gothic window. A porch was added in 1910. In 1890 the old church building was used as a private school run by the Wesleyans. The timber and galvanised iron manse below is an outstanding example of an elegant transition style residence between the architecture of the Victorian era and Federation era.



Fig. Former Wesleyan Manse, 3 Chapel Street, Nathalia. Source: Lorraine Huddle. 2004

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STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE¹⁵

Nathalia Kurrajong precinct

The other culturally significant places within the precinct, not specifically mentioned in this documentation are listed in Appendix 1 and are documented in the accompanying database. The history and description that precedes this Statement of Cultural Significance is the source of the evidence for the statement below.

The precinct is **aesthetically** significant on a **LOCAL** level. **(AHC, D2)** It contains many aesthetically pleasing and unique views particularly the Kurrajong trees which form a canopy over Bromley Street as an Avenue of Honour. Other important views include those to, from and within the precinct which include Broken Creek and the trees on its banks, including the Moreton Bay Fig trees, and the Uniting Church. There are also excellent examples of architectural styles from the Victorian period and Federation periods, particularly the Uniting and Catholic churches and former Wesleyan Manse. The skyline is punctuated with high pitched gable and hipped roofs, ornate chimneys, gum trees and exotic trees. There are aesthetically pleasing views in both directions along Bromley Street and along Broken Creek,

The precinct is **socially significant** on a **LOCAL** level. **(AHC A.4, G.1)** The development and continued care of religious, educational and memorial places illustrates the civic pride of the local community to improve and maintain their community facilities since the inception of the town and the beautification of the streets in the form of shade trees along the river bank, and with substantial places of worship, education and memorial in the form of an Avenue of Honour of Kurrajongs along both sides of Bromley Street.

The Kurrajong Precinct is **historically significant** on a **LOCAL** level through its association with the early periods of Nathalia's history, particularly with the development of education and religious institutions in the late nineteenth century. **(AHC A.4, G.1)** The Uniting Church and former manse are also associated with the Wesleyan (later Uniting Church) community and its role in developing cultural and educational institutions in Nathalia in the 1890s since that period. The Catholic Church is also associated with the religious and educational interests of the catholic community in Nathalia and district. **(AHC G.1)** The Victorian weatherboard homes from the 1880s are historically important on a local level through their association with the earliest residential and educational development in the town. **(AHC A.4)**

The Great War Memorial Avenue of Honour of Kurrajong trees (c.1920) is historically and socially important on a local level through its association with the history of defending Australia, particularly in the Great War of 1914-18, and as a site of local memory and the great losses and sacrifices of the town in war. **(AHC A.4, G.1)**

The precinct has **scientific** significance on a **LOCAL** level. Building materials such wrought iron and stained glass re testament to the high level of technical skill that artisans in Nathalia possessed. The use of these materials is becoming rare and their presence forms an integral part of the precinct's fabric.

Overall, Nathalia Kurrajong precinct is culturally significant at the LOCAL level.

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- 1 Hibbin, p.13.
2 See also Thematic Environmental History (2004).
3 *Victorian Municipal Directory* 1889.
4 *Australian Handbook* 1903.
5 Hibbin, p.171.
6 Thematic Environmental History (2004).
7 David McKenzie 2005
8 David McKenzie 2005
9 Hibbin, p. 108.
10 Tim Mannion. Nathalia Historical Society.
11 *Australian Builder and Contractor's News*: 21/05/1892 p. 358 – MLI. *Building, Engineering
& Mining Journal*: 11/06/1892 s.p. 3 - MLI11/06/1892 - Tenders accepted for erection of
12 Roman Catholic Church, Nathalia. T. A. Neild acc. £1211 - MLI
13 Tim Mannion. Nathalia Historical Society.
14 Thematic Environmental History (2004).
15 Hibbin, p.108.
Definitions used are from the *Burra Charter* 1999; historical themes relate to the Principal
Australian Themes – Australian Heritage Commission; criteria for Locally Significant places
are from the Australian Heritage Commission and in the case of State Significant places, from
Heritage Victoria; levels of significance used are State and Local, which directly relate to the
two legislative authorities who administer the protection of heritage places, the State
Government and Local Government respectively.