



**Edgar Le Blond Henderson c.1930**  
(RAIA WA)

**Edgar Le Blond Henderson** (1890-1971) was born 7 July 1890 at Hawthorn, Melbourne. The middle name was derived from his French grandmother, Jeanne Louisa Caroline Le Blond. Edgar was born with an identical twin (Gilbert Dowling Henderson) to parents Edgar Jerome Henderson (1861-1928), architect, and Mary, née O'Neill. The family moved to Western Australia during 1896. Educated at the Christian Brothers College, Perth, Edgar junior worked for short periods in the State Government Survey Department and Public Works Department before commencing private practice with his father in 1914.

Prior to the First World War Edgar was co-winner in a Commonwealth Department of Defence competition for the design of an airplane, and in subsequent years delivered illustrated lectures in aerodynamics and on the theory of flight. It appears that he tried to join the Australian Army in 1916, but was rejected, possibly for medical reasons. Elected to the council of the Royal Institute of Architects of WA in 1923, serving for 38 years, he was made a Fellow of the RIAWA in 1925, acting as treasurer in 1926-1929 and president 1930-1931. A member of the Architects Board of WA for over 30 years, including 13 years as chairman, he was made a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1958. Often referred to as 'E Le B', his contributions and achievements were recognized with an OBE in 1960.

Henderson joined the Rottnest Island Board in 1933 following the sudden death of Joseph Allen, also an architect, and served for 38 years until ill-health caused him to resign in June 1971. He was directly involved in, or actually designed all

buildings during his period of tenure that were built on Rottneest, other than military buildings. He provided plans, specifications and administered works, often in an honorary capacity. Amongst many projects at Rottneest, Henderson designed the Vlamingh Memorial in 1935, oversaw many conversions in the Settlement for tourist accommodation, the construction of bungalows, the conversion of the Government flats to a hotel and subsequent extensions, works to the shopping area, and the Board's offices.

Henderson is best-known for his succession of Inter-War Gothic and Inter-War Romanesque style Catholic churches, hospitals, convents and schools. His church designs include: 1924 Sisters of Mercy Chapel, Victoria Square, Perth; 1926 St John the Baptist Church, Dumbleyung; 1929 St Anne's Church, Pingelly; 1929 St Mary's Church, Wyalkatchem; 1929 St Michael the Archangel Church, Konnongorring; 1932 St Anthony's Church, Wanneroo; 1933 St Joseph's Church, Busselton; 1933 Sacred Heart Church, Beverley; 1933 Sacred Heart Church, Mundaring; 1934 St Joseph's Church, Subiaco; 1936 Holy Rosary Church, Nedlands; 1936 St Thomas the Apostle Church, Claremont; 1937 St Columba's Church, South Perth; 1939 St Joseph's Church, Albany - front and transept extensions; 1939 Chapel at Convent of the Good Shepherd (Church of St Michael the Archangel at Catholic Education Centre), Leederville; 1941 St Patrick's Church, Waroona; and post war in the mid 1950s (as Henderson & Thompson) chapels at St Thomas More College UWA and St John of God Hospital, Subiaco (demolished 1994).

E Le B formed a partnership with Fremantle born architect-artist Allan Gamble (1907-2001) from 1937 to 1939. Gamble's fine sketching abilities were a great asset to the Henderson & Gamble practice, and he was later to exhibit art works as far away as New York. The pair produced many fine buildings together, including the initial buildings at Santa Maria College in Attadale and St Louis' College in Claremont, however the Second World War soon interrupted the local building industry. Henderson served as a Captain in the Royal Australian Engineers during the war, enlisting in April 1942, and was only able to resume practice shortly after being discharged in August 1945. Gamble worked for a period of time with Stephenson & Turner in Sydney, before taking a position as a lecturer in architecture with Sydney University in 1945.

E Le B continued to practice successfully in WA for many years, in 1948 inviting George Pruett Thompson (1913-1997) into partnership as Henderson & Thompson. Thompson had been one of Henderson's articled students from 1931, and later recalled that when he joined the firm there was only one project on the drawing boards – a group of three shops at Northam. After Henderson's retirement, Thompson carried on the practice until 1983, part of a team designing buildings including fine chapels at Aquinas and Trinity Colleges, amongst many other projects.

Edgar Le Blond married Nellie Josephine Franklin and had five children: Margaret Mary (Margot) born in 1921 but died in 1954 at only 32 years of age, John Keith (Keith) born in 1923 at 14 Field Street Mount Lawley, Herbert Richard (Richard) born in 1924 (and worked for Henderson & Thompson), Patricia Mary born in 1927 at 14 Field Street Mount Lawley, and Edgar Brian (Brian) born in 1929 - at Brian's engagement in 1951 his parents were still living at 14 Field Street.

A prominent twentieth century practitioner whose life and extensive works would provide excellent material for a detailed study, Edgar Le Blond Henderson died at Floreat Park on 5 November 1971, aged 81 years.

#### References:

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- 'New Convent Chapel for Perth', *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1924, p.9 (Sisters of Mercy, Vict Sq.).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 16 May 1925, p.9 (Church Dumbleyung, Convent Wagin).
- 'How Tenderers Fared', *Daily News*, 16 June 1927, p.2 (cnr Archdeacon & Princess Nedlands).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 24 December 1927, p.3 (concrete block church Konnongorring).
- 'New Roman Catholic Church', *The West Australian*, 22 March 1930, p.6 (tenders Nedlands).
- 'Building Enterprise', *The West Australian*, 30 August 1930, p.6 (Loreto Webster St Nedlands).
- 'Current Work', *The West Australian*, 26 March 1932, p.11 (Wembley Hotel, Wanneroo Church).
- 'Roman Catholic Church', *The West Australian*, 10 June 1933, p.6 (St Joseph's Busselton).
- 'A Beverley Church', *The West Australian*, 22 July 1933, p.6 (opening by Archbishop Clune).
- 'St Joseph's Church Subiaco', *Daily News*, 4 November 1933, p.12 (laying of foundation stone).
- 'Famous Dutch Navigator Commemorated', *The West Australian*, 9 November 1935, p.16 (Vlamingh Memorial at Rottneest).
- 'Christian Brothers' School', *The West Australian*, 18 January 1936, p.4 (CBC Highgate).
- 'New Claremont Church to cost £3970', *Daily News*, 28 April 1936, p.3 (building permit).
- 'St Thomas' Roman Catholic Church', *The West Australian*, 21 November 1936, p.4 (photo).
- 'New College at Attadale', *The West Australian*, 25 September 1937, p.15 (foundation stone).

'Perspective drawing', *The West Australian*, 20 November 1937, p.11 (store Busselton for T.W. Peake).

'Perspective drawing', *The West Australian*, 18 December 1937, p.4 (prep school Stirling Hwy Claremont for Jesuits - St Louis').

'Architects' Design Won Contest', *Daily News*, 5 February 1938, p.13 (College, Victoria Square).

'Santa Maria College', *The West Australian*, 24 February 1938, p.14 (opening by Prendiville).

'New Jesuit College', *The West Australian*, 21 May 1938, p.10 (St Louis', Claremont).

'Chapel at cost of £20,400', *The West Australian*, 10 December 1938, p.9 (photo of Chapel, Convent of the Good Shepherd under construction).

'Albany Church', *The West Australian*, 24 December 1938, p.8 (front and transept extensions).

*The West Australian*, 6 May 1939, p.8 (photo of Chapel, Convent of the Good Shepherd).

'New Bunbury Hospital', *The West Australian*, 3 October 1940, p.12 (opening SJOG Hospital).

'Union Offices and Studio', *Daily News*, 21 November 1940, p.19 (AWU offices, radio 6LP).

'Mr Edgar LeB Henderson', *The West Australian*, 23 November 1945, p.6 (resumes practice).

'Rottneest Hotel's Opening', *Sunday Times*, 6 December 1953, p.7.

'Hotel Rottneest Presents a Stately Appearance', *The West Australian*, 14 December 1953, p.1.

'Chapel near a hospital to cost £82,000', *The West Australian*, 2 September 1954, p.3 (SJOG Subiaco).

'Henderson & Thompson Architects', *The Architect*, Vol 4, 1985, pp.16-17.

*Chronological History of Rottneest Island*, part of a conservation plan prepared by Oline Richards and Considine & Griffiths Architects, Government of WA, September 1995, pp.27-28.

'Obituary - George Thompson', *The Architect*, Spring 1998, p.10.

R. F. Stockwell, 'Henderson, Gilbert Dowling (1890–1977)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/henderson-gilbert-dowling-12975/text23449>, accessed 20 February 2013.

Note: Catholic Church Archives in Perth hold the Michael Broderick Collection (not viewed), containing plans for churches, religious orders, schools, hospitals, private residences, banks, hotels and commercial buildings, many by E.J. Henderson and E.Le.B. Henderson.

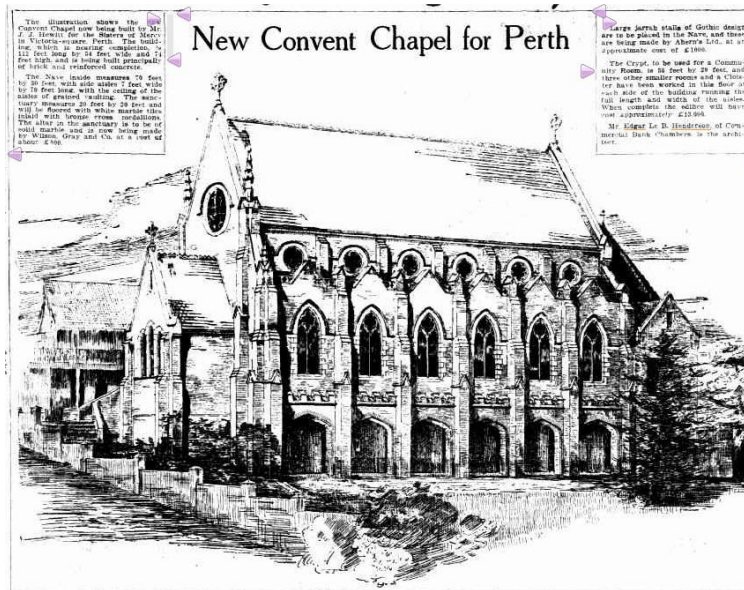
Info re Konnongorring Catholic Church - <http://www.visitgoomalling.com.au/see/konnongorring> accessed 8 March 2013.

Contributing author: John Taylor with research assistance from Shan Callow

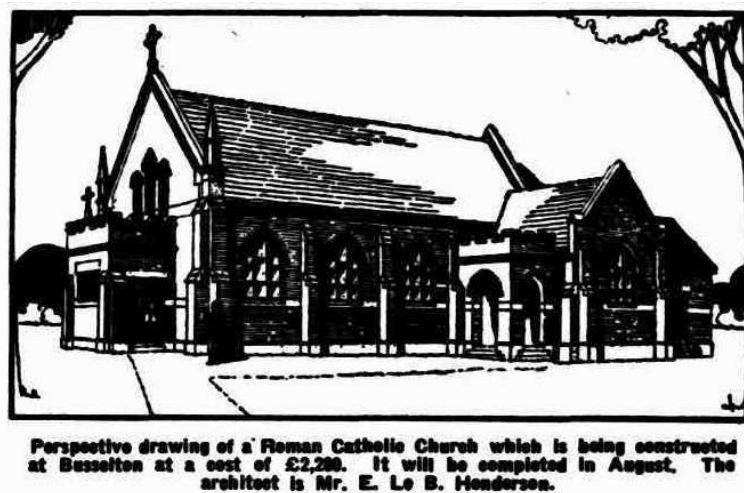
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Sisters of Mercy Chapel, Victoria Square, Perth (*Sunday Times*, 15 June 1924, p.9)



St Joseph's Church, Busselton (*The West Australian*, 10 June 1933, p.6)



Wembley Hotel, Cambridge Street Wembley of 1933 (June 1980 photo SLWA 322087PD)





Sacred Heart Church, Beverley of 1933 (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/geoff-inoz/5457464639/>)



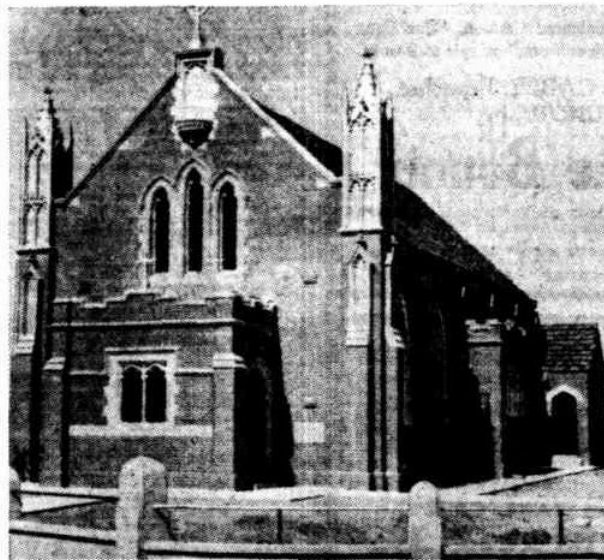
St Joseph's Church, Subiaco opened in 1934 (SLWA 001593D)



Vlamingh Memorial on Rottneest Island (*The West Australian*, 9 November 1935, p.16)

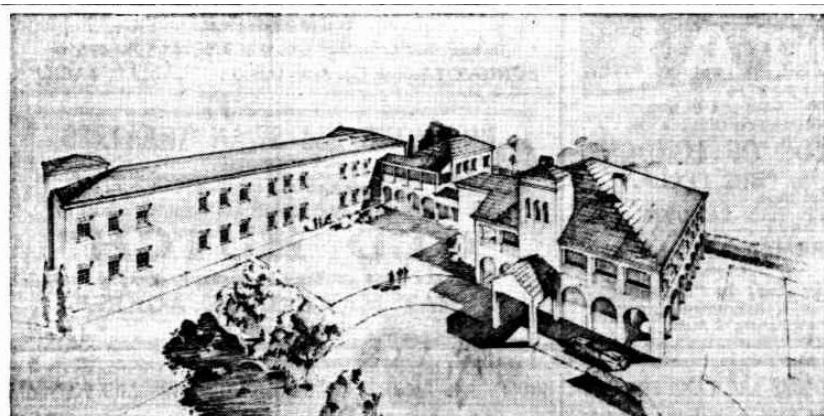


Holy Rosary Church, Thomas Street Nedlands built in 1936  
(<http://www.holyrosarynedlands.org.au/Buildings.html>)



St. Thomas' Roman Catholic Church, corner of Melville-street and College-road, Claremont, which will be opened by Archbishop Prendiville tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. The architect was Mr. E. Le B. Henderson.

St Thomas' Church, Claremont (*The West Australian*, 21 November 1936, p.4)



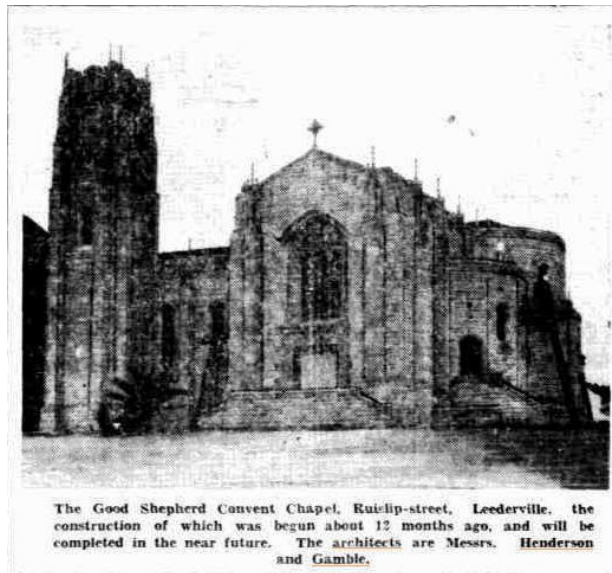
Perspective drawing of the proposed preparatory school in Stirling-highway, Claremont, for the Jesuit Fathers. The architects are Messrs. E. Le B. Henderson and Allan Gamble.

Prep School at St Louis' College, Claremont (*The West Australian*, 18 December 1937, p.4)

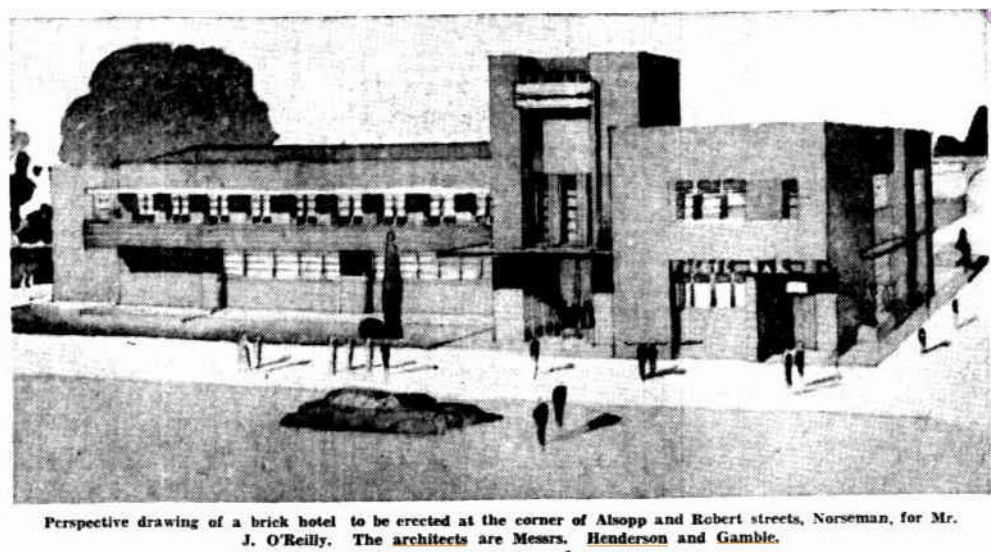




Portion of St Louis' College, Claremont (*The West Australian*, 28 May 1938, p.8)



Chapel at Convent of the Good Shepherd, Leederville (*The West Australian*, 6 May 1939, p.8)



Railway Hotel Norseman (*The West Australian*, 20 May 1939, p.8)