

Heritage Inventory Sheet

Recommended Name	Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church		
Site Image			
Address	56-60 Vaughan Street, Lidcombe NSW, 2141		
Lot/Section/DP	1	-	868360
Heritage Study ID	HS75		
LEP ID	Not currently included on the Cumberland LEP		
Heritage Conservation Area	Not included		
Date Updated	January 2021		
Significance Level	LOCAL		
Site Type	Level 1	Built	
	Level 2	Religion	

Curtilage Map



Statement of Significance

The Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church is locally significant for its historic, aesthetic, social, rarity and representative values. The Church has historical significance being located on land granted to Robert Blackman in 1856 and later subdivided by Matthew Henry Stephens in 1879. The Church was constructed in between c.1991-2001 as a result of the Fifth wave of Russian migration to Australia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Church has social significance for its associations with the Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian community in Lidcombe who have continued to use this Church and hall for religious practice. The Church demonstrates the rich religious and cultural traditions that Russian migrants brought to Australia, and the continuation of those traditions in this country.

The Church has aesthetic significance as an intact example of a church built by the Russian migrant community in Sydney, with a layout and design that is derived from traditional Orthodox architecture in Europe. This includes the Basilica plan with ten domes. The Church is also a prominent landmark within Lidcombe, with its distinctive gold domes visible over the low-rise residential landscape of Lidcombe. The Church is an excellent and example of a Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church in the local area, designed in a traditional Orthodox style. The item is rare as the only Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church in New South Wales.

Criteria Assessment

a) Historic	The Church has historical significance being located on land granted to Robert Blackman in 1856 and later subdivided by Matthew Henry Stephens in 1879. The Church was constructed in between c.1991-
-------------	---

	2001 as a result of the Fifth wave of Russian migration to Australia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.
b) Associative	The item does not meet this criterion.
c) Aesthetic/Technical	The Church has aesthetic significance as an intact example of a church built by the Russian migrant community in Sydney, with a layout and design that is derived from traditional Orthodox architecture in Europe. This includes the Basilica plan with ten domes. The Church is also a prominent landmark within Lidcombe, with its distinctive gold domes visible over the low-rise residential landscape of Lidcombe.
d) Social	The Church has social significance for its associations with the Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian community in Lidcombe who have continued to use this Church and hall for religious practice. The Church demonstrates the rich religious and cultural traditions that Russian migrants brought to Australia, and the continuation of those traditions in this country.
e) Scientific	The item does not meet this criterion.
f) Rarity	The item is rare as the only Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church in New South Wales.
g) Representativeness	The Church is an excellent and example of a Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church in the local area, designed in a tradition Orthodox style.

Physical Description

The Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church draws on traditional Orthodox Church design and planning. The Church has been built to a Basilica plan with a large rectangular nave, transept, and a curved apse to the rear of the Church. The Church is oriented east-west, is entered from the west and features a towered façade. The walls are constructed of blonde brick set on a darker brick base and feature a course of expressed brick and subtle brick pilasters.

The Church roof is tiled with metal tiles and features 10 onion domes. This includes a central prominent dome surrounded by four medium sized domes and five smaller domes. Each dome is surmounted by a cross and is sheeted in gold and silver diamond-shaped metal shingles. The central dome is supported by a circular drum with arch-headed windows which is set upon a short octagonal tower with porthole windows. A medium sized dome is located at each of the four corners of the main roof structure. These domes are set atop a circular drum which emerges from a curved arched base. The four remaining domes are significantly smaller and are set on each end of the transept, on the which is located at the front of the main roof structure and set behind the front portico.

The western façade of the Church features a forward facing gable with a central square tower with conical roof clad in metal diamond-shaped shingles. An entrance portico projects from this tower and consists of a gabled roof with metal tiles, supported on four brick piers which have been arranged to form three arches. The portico is accessed by a set of modern steps that feature tessellated tiles and metal edging. The entrance door consists of tall timber panelled double doors with segmented arched transom light. The doors have metal security doors attached. Two icons flank the door. The northern and southern elevations of the Church featured identical entrance porticos.

The Church features aluminium framed segmented arch headed windows along all elevations. These are varied in sizes with large windows flanking the entrance porticos on the north and south elevations. These windows feature an expressed brick arch and take up the full height of the wall.

There are two structures related to the Church located to the west and south (rear) of the Church. Both structures are constructed of simple face-brick. The rear building has a flat roof and with and the structure to the west has a dutch-gabled roof. Both structures are sympathetic in design with the Church and were likely to have been constructed at the same time as the Church building.

The Church is surrounded by a tall bronze palisade fence set atop a rendered brick base and piers along Vaughan Street. A brick fence with brick piers separate the Church from its neighbouring houses. A tall hedge traverses the inside of the fence and small palm trees are scattered around the Church. The landscape surrounding the Church is paved in a concrete stamped to appear as paving.

Overall, the Church and hall are well-maintained and are in a good condition. There is some brick cracking along the side wall of the Church.

Condition	Good	Fair	Poor
------------------	-------------	------	------

Alterations and Additions

- New rendered fence

The Church is considered to be of high integrity and maintains its original form and fabric.

Integrity	High	Moderate	Low
------------------	-------------	----------	-----

** element detracts from the overall cultural significance of the place*

Historical Notes

Construction years	c.1991-2001
--------------------	-------------

Lidcombe

The suburb of Lidcombe is located 14 kilometres west of Sydney and was first seen as an exploring party rowed up the Parramatta River came close to the area on 4 February 1788. Early land grants in the area were given to settlers around 1804 such as H.G. Douglas, Joseph Hyde Potts, and Samuel Haslam who established the first farms in the area. These early land grants ranged between 60-200 acres and were focused around Parramatta Road and the small tracks deviating from it.

The name "Lidcombe" is derived from the combination names of two former Mayors. When the name Rookwood no longer appealed to residents (due to its association with the expanding necropolis), a new name was created for the suburb. This combined Frederick Lidbury, an active local government figure and Mayor of Rookwood on several occasions with Henry Larcombe, his main Mayoral opponent. The suburb was renamed to "Lidcombe" on 15 October 1913.

The opening of the railway station at Lidcombe (known as Haslam Creek station) in 1859 led to the subdivision and subsequent development of Lidcombe. The New South Wales government an active subdivider in the area. Specifically, in a portion of land north of Rookwood cemetery not incorporated into the Rookwood Necropolis. The land now bounded by Bachell Street, Nicholas Street, Swete Street and the railway, was subdivided and sold at auction by the government from the 1880s onwards. Other prominent subdividers at Lidcombe and Rookwood included land, building and investment companies. Groups such as the Sydney and Provincial Land and Building Company Ltd, Land Company of Australasia, and National Permanent Building, as well as others were responsible for much of the subdivision and sale of estates.

Lidcombe experienced a housing and industrial boom in the 1920s. High-tech industries that were established in the area at included the manufacture of electrical goods, motor car manufacturing, steel construction and wool and knitted industries.

The Russian Orthodox Christian Church in Sydney

The land on which the Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church now stands is located on a part of 60 acres of land originally granted to Robert Blackman by Crown Grant on the 1856. Matthew Henry Stephens purchased Blackman's estate in 1879 and subsequently subdivided and sold the land along Vaughan Street. The subject site was sold in the c.1900s and three Federation cottages were constructed on this land. The cottages are visible on aerial imagery until 1991. At some point between 1991 and 2001 all three cottages demolished and the Russian Orthodox Church was constructed.

The earliest Russian Orthodox Church services in Sydney were conducted at the Greek or Syrian Churches in inner Sydney, while Easter Mass was celebrated at Christ Church St Laurence near Central Station. In 1933, the first Russian Orthodox parish was established under Father Methodius Shlemin, who then held monthly Sunday services at the Russian House in George Street. Many Russians in Sydney at that time lived around the eastern suburbs and the first Russian Orthodox Church, St Vladimir's, was opened in 1942 in a converted house at 31 Robertson Road, Centennial Park. It was the centre of Russian Orthodox life in Sydney until the early 1950s.

With the influx of Orthodox believers to Post-War Sydney, the Russian Orthodox Church began to play a key role in Russian community affairs. In 1949, land was purchased in Vernon Street, Strathfield, and the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul was consecrated in December 1953. Strathfield and Burwood soon became the hub of Russian cultural life in Sydney.

In 1976, the pro-Soviet Russian Social Club, which was previously located in George Street, Sydney moved to Lidcombe and the community constructed a library and theatre in William Street, Lidcombe which still exists today. The Russian community in Lidcombe and surrounding areas increased following this period, particularly following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church was built in between 1991-2001. The construction of this Church is related to the fifth wave of Russian migration to Australia during the 1990s following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Church remains in use by the Russian Old Rite Christian Orthodox Community.

Recommendations					
Heritage Management		Existing Built and Landscape Elements		Future Development and Planning	
1. Include this item as a new heritage listing on the LEP.	X	6. Original fabric is highly significant and should be maintained.	X	12. Alterations and additions should respond to the existing pattern of development, with careful consideration of the setting (form, scale, bulk, setback and height).	X
2. Include this item's listing as part of or as a Heritage Conservation Area.		7. Unsympathetic alterations that detract from the cultural significance of the item should be removed.		13. New alterations and additions should respect the historic aesthetic/character of the item and area (e.g. paint scheme, materiality, style, landscape elements).	X
3. Consider additional research to nominate this item for the State Heritage Register.		8. Maintain heritage landscape elements and schemes.	X	14. Future uses for this item should be compatible with its historical functions/associations.	X
4. The heritage curtilage for this item should be revised/reduced.		9. Maintain the existing setting of the heritage item, informed by the historic pattern of neighbouring development (form, scale, bulk, setback and height).	X		

5. Not recommended for inclusion on the LEP.	10. Maintain the historic aesthetic/character of the item and area (e.g. paint scheme, materiality, style, landscape elements).	X	
	11. The condition of this item is poor. Condition and maintenance should be monitored.		

Other recommendations and/or comments:

- None

Listings

Heritage Listing	Listing Title	Listing Number
Heritage Act – State Heritage Register	N/A	-
Local Environmental Plan	N/A	-
Cumberland Heritage Study	Russian Old Rite Orthodox Christian Church	HS75
National Trust Australia Register	N/A	-

Other References

- Kass T. 1996, *Auburn Heritage Study Draft Final Report. Volume 2 Historical Context Report*. Sydney: Auburn Council.
- Kass, T 2008, *Lidcombe*, accessed 27 March 2019, <https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/lidcombe>
- Godden Mackay Logan 2002, *Lidcombe Hospital Site – Conservation Management Plan*, Godden Mackay Logan.
- Moustafine. 2011. *Russians*, accessed July 2020, <https://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/russians>

Limitations

1. Access to all heritage items was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not assessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain.
3. Unless additional research was required, historical research for all heritage items was based on existing information in the Cumberland Heritage Study Stage 1 2019 prepared by Extent Heritage.

Additional Images



Russian Orthodox Church.



Domes of Church



Detail of nave.



View of Church along Vaughan Street.