THINK BRICK AUSTRALIA

Case Study 11

D'Houet Building, Genazzano FCJ College

Kew VIC

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D'Houet Building

Genazzano FCJ College

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Soon after its founding in 1891, Genazzano FCJ College had its own dairy cows, hens and an orchard in grounds where the girls played catte, a game similar to croquet. Today Kew is no longer a semi-rural idyll and catte is all but forgotten. Reflecting our technological age, in March 2000 the college unveiled its newest building which is wired and online.

The D'Houet (pronounced 'doo-ay') Building's three levels house a library, science and IT facilities, classrooms and staff areas. The reinforced concrete structure is clad with non-loadbearing cavity brickwork, the inner leaf being exposed.

Although the new building is prominently located, the real college centre is its oldest resident, the adjoining Wardell Building. This superb structure is said to be the only education building designed by William Wardell, best known for Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral and such Melbourne landmarks as St Patrick's Cathedral and Government House. Wardell's masterpiece is the ES&A building in Collins Street with its stunning banking chamber.

Not surprisingly, Frank Baglieri and Raf Jovanovic of Norris Architects were mindful of this heritage when planning and designing the new building. "We wanted to create something new and modern in its own right but also reflect the style of the Wardell Building," says Baglieri.

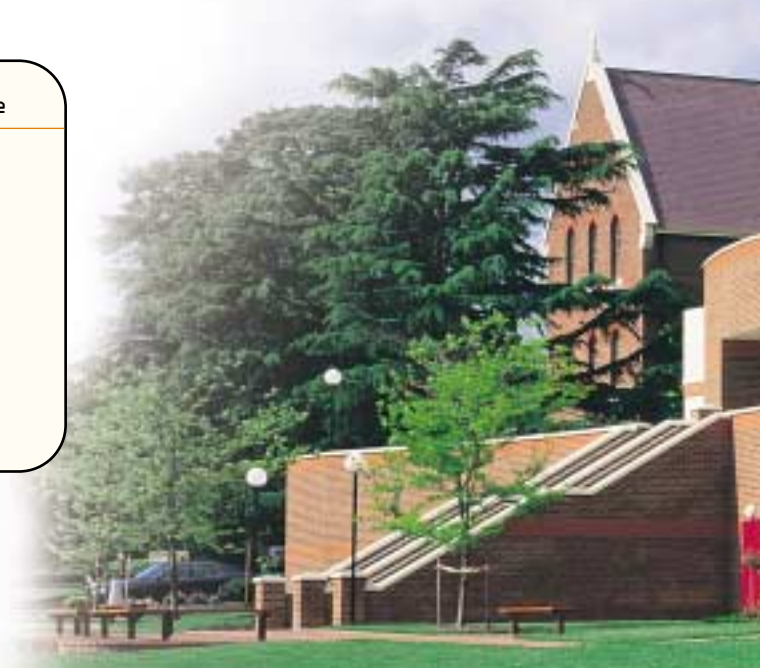
According to a newspaper report of the time, the Wardell Building was "built of bricks made in the neighbourhood." Baglieri considers they were "very lucky to get a brick that doesn't match exactly but reflects the Wardell's character and feel." The main brick is a subtly-textured red/brown blend, complemented with broad bands of red bricks and rendered panels. Over 230,000 clay bricks were used in the project.

The D'Houet Building picks up other elements of Wardell's design including slate and copper. Respecting its neighbour's seniority, the upper levels are stepped back to ensure an unimpeded view, with deeply recessed windows further reducing visual impact.

A grand staircase dominates the front of the building leading to clay-paved paths, brick landscape features and expansive lawns with sweeping views. However this is not the main entrance, that's at ground level on the north side, adjacent to Wardell.

Norris Architects worked hard to avoid a monolithic building "that might have achieved the client's spatial requirements but gave nothing back visually to the site itself," Baglieri considers. "I think we have achieved that, and certainly that's reflected in comments from the client and others."

Client:	Genazzano FCJ College
Architect:	Norris Architects
Builder:	Dura Australia
Bricklayer:	Dura Australia, Deca Constructions
Paving & landscaping:	Bright Landscapes
Building cost:	$5.3 million
Photographer:	Roger du Buisson



The D'Houet Building picks up elements of its 1891 neighbour designed by prominent Victorian-era architect William Wilkinson Wardell. The upper levels are stepped back and windows deeply recessed. Over 230,000 clay bricks were laid in non-load-bearing cavity walls to the reinforced concrete structure.

The double curve of the facade – concave at ground level, convex at the first floor – adds interest and reduces visual impact. The grand staircase leads to brick landscape features and sweeping lawns.

This is a large building – as the southern elevation clearly shows – but the designers worked hard to balance the client's spatial needs with the site's visual and heritage requirements.