

The architect of *St Brigids* is unknown, as is the source of the unusual name. This homage to St Brigid was perhaps the suggestion of Arthur's brother, Philip, a Redemptorist priest who was passionately devoted to all things Irish. Among the saints of Ireland, Brigid is revered second only to St Patrick, and as the patroness of blacksmiths she may have held special appeal to the Lassetter family, whose fortune had its origins in the selling of ironmongery.

In 1897, when *St Brigids* was built, Lassetter was a household name by virtue of *Lassetter's Stores*, a massive retail enterprise fronting George Street. Arthur Lassetter, first occupant of *St Brigids*, held a key position in his father's firm.

With the death of Frederic Lassetter in 1911, the *Redleaf* property was subdivided, in preparation for sale. The new arrangement left *Redleaf* standing on a much reduced site, with its sandstone stables (today known as *The Annexe*) and most of its former grounds transferred to the newly independent *St Brigids* property. The original holding was only re-consolidated through Council's separate acquisition of *Redleaf* and *St Brigids*, a process that was completed through a series of purchases and resumptions between 1940 and 1950.

However, before becoming public property, *St Brigids* was home to two further families. Retired pastoralist William Moulder and his family were in residence during the years of the First World War, while the property's final owner, Henry Hunter White of *Havilah*, Mudgee, purchased the house in 1919, intending *St Brigids* as a Sydney base. Ultimately, White took up permanent residence with his wife, Leila and daughter Constance, and the family's association with *St Brigids* continued until 1952.

Accounts of life at *St Brigids* indicate that the second storey of the building was occupied mainly by reception rooms, with the northern end of the ground level used

for bedrooms, and the southern end for utility rooms and servants' quarters. Photographs show that the verandahs on both levels were originally open, and fond memories have endured from this era of dances and social evenings held on these airy spaces. Similarly, the gardens provided the setting for picnics and parties, while tennis afternoons were a regular social activity on the court that once occupied the lower terrace of the gardens.

Despite its use as a Library for almost fifty years, evidence of the former residence abounds within the fabric and detail of the building itself, while interested visitors can discover more of *St Brigid's* past at the Library's Local History Centre, Sherbrooke Hall, Double Bay.

#### Local History Centre

Mon to Tues 10am - 5pm

Wednesday Closed

Thurs to Fri 10am - 2.30pm

Tel: (02) 9362 0044

#### Double Bay Central Library

Mon to Fri 10am - 8pm\*

Sat & Sun 10am - 4pm

\*The junior library closes at 6pm

Tel: (02) 9391 7000



#### Woollahra Municipal Library

548 New South Head Road

Double Bay NSW 2028

Tel: (02) 9391 7000 Fax: (02) 9391 7116

E-mail address:  
library@woollahra.nsw.gov.au

Website address:  
www.woollahra.nsw.gov.au  
L2003 - 3



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# A brief history of St Brigids

books

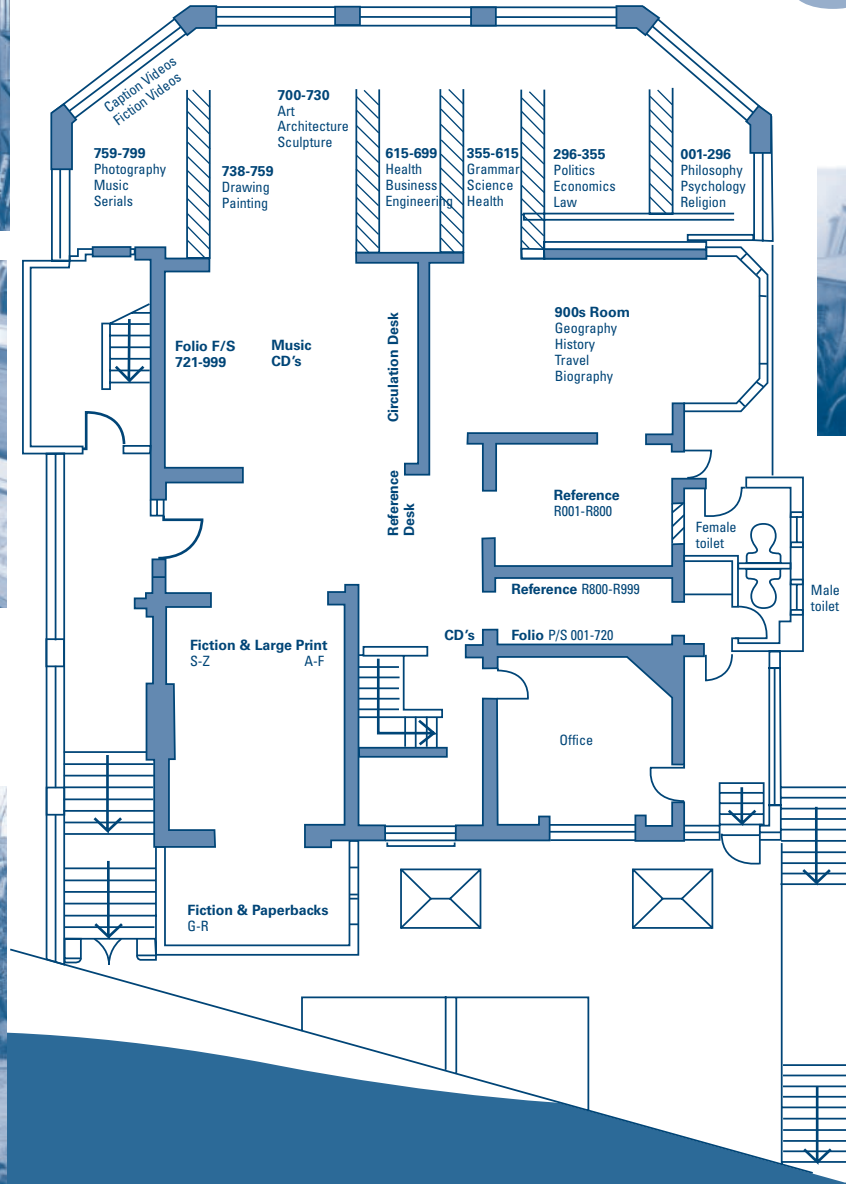
Since 1957, Woollahra Council has operated a library service from *St Brigids*, a Federation-era building neighbouring Council's headquarters at *Redleaf*. Both *Redleaf* and *St Brigids* were originally built as private houses. Fortunately, photographs have survived of both buildings in their former domestic roles, and the Library has also recorded the reminiscences of various people able to recall this era. Three families have been associated with *St Brigids*:



- Arthur and Mabel Lassetter (1897 – 1913)
- William and Jessie Moulder (1913 – 1919)
- Henry Hunter White and Leila White (1919 – 1950)

The histories of *Redleaf* and *St Brigids* have always been closely interconnected. In 1863, *Redleaf* was built to the design of George Allen Mansfield for merchant William Walker on land that also encompassed the present day Blackburn Gardens and the site of the future Library. *Redleaf* was to be home to a succession of notable Sydney families before being acquired by Woollahra Council in 1940, and eventually converted, in 1947, for use as a council chambers.

It was Frederic Lassetter, the third owner of *Redleaf*, who was responsible for the existence of *St Brigids*. Lassetter had the house built in 1897 in a corner of the *Redleaf* grounds, as a home for his third son, Arthur and his wife, Mabel (*nee* Slater).



**Top floor (St Brigids)**  
Adult Library  
Collection layout

**Located downstairs**  
Childrens Library  
Literacy Collection  
800s Collection  
Books in other languages

information