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Cover image *St. Dominic's Priory Cope*

Mother Rose Columba Adams (designer) and Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne (embroiderer). St. Dominic's Priory Cope, 1889, silk embroidery on silk jacquard, St Dominic's Priory Museum, North Adelaide.

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FOR A GODLY PURPOSE: PLANNING SAINT MARY'S CHAPEL IN OLD SYDNEY-TOWN

Michael Sternbeck*



Father J.J. Therry, a photograph taken circa 1860

The recent Bicentenary of the foundation of old Saint Mary's, Sydney was an opportunity to review previous studies about the old Cathedral and to explore some interesting leads to records that had laid untouched for decades. The story of the day when Sydney gathered to witness the laying of the Foundation stone of the old church by Governor Macquarie is well-known, but more obscure details, such as how the Hyde Park site was chosen and who designed the old church, have not been fully explored. It would seem opportune, therefore, to trace the story of how old Saint Mary's came into being and to demonstrate that it was by no means the outcome of one man's efforts, namely Father John Joseph Therry, but certainly the result of his leadership.

Gathering them in

Since the European settlement of this continent began as an off-shore prison, it is perhaps understandable that the practice of religion was not marked by enthusiasm. Some historians have commented that the practice of religion was seen by the convicts as part of the actual punishment.¹ For Catholic convicts, the situation was slightly different; the Government of the Colony, over three decades, had not encouraged the practice of Catholicism and sometimes suppressed it.

¹ Grocott, Alan, *Convicts, Churches and Clergyman*, University of Sydney, 1980, p. 117, *passim*.

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We can imagine the surprise, therefore, of the readers of the Colony's only newspaper, *The Sydney Gazette* to find an announcement prominently placed in the 17th June 1820 edition which reported that a gathering of Roman Catholics two days earlier had unanimously resolved to hold a public meeting at the Sydney Court House at the end of June to begin planning for a Catholic Chapel. This was something different for the inhabitants of the Colony of New South Wales. Their experience of Catholicism was of a circumscribed, private religion, which had even proved politically subversive. The Uprising by Irish convicts at Castle Hill in 1804 was never far from the minds of Colonial Government. The Church of England was the official form of Christianity in the Penal Colony of New South Wales and its ministers wished it to remain so.

Those views were challenged by the arrival in Sydney on 2nd May 1820 of two Irish priests who, with both zeal and enthusiasm, had volunteered to be missionaries in the far-off Penal Colony of New South Wales. The British Government had formally appointed them as Catholic Chaplains to the Colony and when they arrived, the Governor, Major-General Lachlan Macquarie, recognised their credentials and gave them instructions on how they were to conduct their work. These two priests were the pioneers John Joseph Therry and Philip Conolly. Soon, the two chaplains would have understood that their flock was almost entirely composed of convicts or former convicts and amounted to around 7400 men and women and children, spread throughout Sydney and neighbouring regions, such as Parramatta, Liverpool, the Hawkesbury etc.² Where would their work begin?

Mass and the Sacraments (particularly baptisms and marriages) had begun to be celebrated by the two priests in private residences, but they lost little time in determining that Catholics needed a permanent and fitting place of worship. It would be a base for the itinerant ministry of the priests, a place where Catholics could gather for the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments. They would also have held that God should be honoured with the construction of a permanent and fitting House of the Lord. There would be a better chance, moreover, of boosting the practice of the Faith once a church had been built. But whether the two priests regarded such a church as a means to an end or an end in itself is not something that can now be readily determined.

The preliminary meeting, which *The Gazette* mentioned, had been held at a

2 The approximate figure of 7400 Catholics or 25% of the population of the Colony in the year 1820 is proposed by James Hugh Donohoe in his interesting study *The Catholics of New South Wales*, (1988) page 11.

premises in Pitt Street, the property of John Reddington.³ The advertised meeting did take place in the Sydney Court House (now ground floor rooms in Parliament House in Macquarie Street) on 30th June and an extensive report appeared the following day in the pages of *The Gazette*. This was, undoubtedly, an article contributed by one of those present. Unfortunately – and probably deliberately – the report does not indicate how many attended. From this, it would be safe to assume numbers were low. The writer of the report was at pains to point out, however, that the meeting was attended by “all the Respectable Catholics of the Colony”.

In the high-blown prose found in newspapers of those long-gone days, a series of eleven resolutions was recorded, which included thanking various persons for their benevolence. It speaks volumes about the vulnerable position Catholics found themselves in that so much of the meeting's resolutions were devoted to thanking those in Authority for their “condescensions.”⁴

More practically, however, it was resolved that Catholics were to “unite with their clergy to build a House of Divine Worship in the Town of Sydney”. And to this end, a Committee was formed at the meeting, led by Fathers Conolly and Therry, which would “select a site for the building, administer the contracts, manage the finances for its building and authorise fundraisers.” A sub-committee was also to be formed to oversee donations from non-Catholics.⁵

From those present at the meeting, seven Catholic laymen were appointed to the Committee: James Meehan, William Davis, James Dempsey, Edward Redmond, Patrick Moore, Michael Hayes and Martin Short. In their different ways, and to a greater or lesser degree, they had been part of the patriotic uprising on the West

3 John Reddington had come to Australia as a convict in 1800 for his part in the Rebellion on the West coast of Ireland in 1798. He had done well for himself and owned an establishment where alcohol was served under licence – a pub named *The Harp Without a Crown*. The premises was also a grocery store and was frequented by Irish Catholics. Although he had died four years before the arrival of the priests - the beneficiaries of his Estate still owned the Pitt Street building. They were Catholic and willing to offer their property for Church purposes. The buildings were near the corner of Pitt and Market Streets, where the Sydney Tower now stands. Mass had also been celebrated in this premises in the month since the two priests arrived in Sydney. As late as 1823, Father Therry was resident at the Pitt Street address.

4 Prior to the Emancipation Act of 1829, the public practice of Catholicism was officially illegal in Great Britain. This was a remnant of the separation of the Church in England from Rome in the reign of Henry VIII. Although Catholics had ceased being persecuted for their Faith throughout most of the eighteenth century in England, there were few Catholic priests and these lived and ministered to Catholics privately. The laws prevented Catholics from constructing anything that even looked like a church.

5 Eighth resolution of the meeting: That John Piper, Robert Jenkins, and Francis Williams, Esquires, be requested by this Meeting to collect the subscriptions of the Protestant Inhabitants of Sydney.

Coast of Ireland in 1798 aimed at overthrowing British Rule in Ireland. James Meehan, William Davis and Michael Hayes all arrived in Sydney in February 1800 aboard the convict transport ship *Friendship*; Edward Redmond and Martin Short arrived at much the same time on the vessel the *Minerva*, whilst James Dempsey arrived in the colony in 1802. John Reddington, mentioned previously, was also among their number. These men had been accused of insurrectionary crimes for which they were not properly tried and of which - in most instances - they were innocent.

After a period of years, each of these men received a conditional pardon by the Colonial Government. Having become successful businessmen or farmers, they all had attained a favourable position in the Colony so that by 1820, two decades after their transportation from Ireland, they had become “the respectable Catholics of the Settlement”. They had come to know each other very well from their twenty-year residence in the Colony.

The Treasurer of the Chapel Building Committee, however, was neither Catholic nor a former convict, but from Armagh in the North of Ireland and a prominent figure in the Colonial Government of Lachlan Macquarie. His name was John Thomas Campbell. He had arrived in Sydney with Governor Macquarie’s entourage in 1810 and was immediately appointed the Governor’s Secretary. For eleven years he was Macquarie’s chief assistant in the administration of the colony, his intimate friend and loyal supporter. It is significant that a man as prominent and well-connected as Campbell became the Committee’s treasurer. It was obviously strategic - he would be instrumental in attracting support from a broader range of Colonists than Catholics. That he accepted the nomination indicates his personal support for the Chapel project and his good will. It also suggests the Governor’s approval of the project.

The Committee lost little time in encouraging donations to the Chapel building fund. Mr Campbell placed an advertisement about the building of the Chapel in *The Sydney Gazette* on 2nd September 1820, in which he advised that an account had been opened at the Bank of New South Wales “for the purpose of receiving subscriptions” and he requested “that persons of every Religious persuasion, disposed to contribute to this laudable Object, will make their subscriptions there as soon as possible, in order to the Committee being thence enabled to commence on the purposed building.” But Mr Campbell also sounded a note of caution to those who were suggesting that there should be more than one Chapel, supporting the needs of Catholics outside Sydney. Almost certainly this would refer to Parramatta

or Liverpool (or both). He wrote that he considered “the manifest superiority of advantage to be derived from such a building being first completed at Sydney, where the principal body of the Roman Catholics reside, before subscriptions for similar purposes elsewhere, be proceeded on.” He reminded readers that “the circumstance of the Roman Catholics of New South Wales being much more numerous than wealthy” it was best that they confine “their contributions for the present to the single Object of erecting a Chapel in the Town of Sydney.”

Fourteen months later, the fundraising efforts in attracting donations to the Chapel building project had proved successful, with the notice filling half a page in *The Sydney Gazette* of 1st December, 1821. The substantial sum of £628 had been donated in the course of almost 18 months – a remarkable figure. More interesting than the pounds, shillings and pence are the names of those who appear in this list, the Notable gentlemen of the Colony at this time. These are names we are familiar with from streets, suburbs and towns, such as Erskine, Jamison, Goulburn, Piper, Wentworth, Druitt, Wollstonecraft, Oxley, Cordeaux and Macquarie. These were all respected non-Catholics, some in official positions within the Colony, and all had made generous donations.

From “the respectable Catholics of the Settlement”, some had made very generous donations, such as William Davis and his wife Catherine: each gave £50. But many non-convict Catholic colonists had not contributed, while many more, being convicts, were in no financial position to do so. Still others, having no cash to offer, offered livestock and other goods. The “Widow’s mite” of the Gospel story comes to mind.

Choosing the site

The frequently-told account of how the Church came to have the land beside Hyde Park for the purposes of building a chapel seems first to have been given by Archdeacon John McEncroe at a public meeting of Sydney-siders on 6th July 1865. Father McEncroe was quoted as saying:

The late W[illiam] Davis asked Father Therry, many years ago, why he did not erect a church in the western portion of Sydney, and Father Therry told him he could not get any land to build a church upon in that part of town, because a person in the Survey Office, a Catholic well known as Jemmy Mein, opposed it. When Father Therry applied to him for a piece of land to build a church in the western part of the city, Jemmy Mein told him that that if he built a church there he would have all the poor in the city paraded before the Governor as he was going to church at St. Phillip’s, and that he

had better go and look for a piece near the prison barracks at Hyde Park.⁶

We met James Meehan (“Jemmy Mein”) earlier in this article, because he was among the members of that committee which was selected by the June 1820 meeting to bring about the construction of a Catholic Chapel in Sydney. Following his arrival in the Colony as a convict in early 1800, James Meehan was assigned as a servant to Charles Grimes, who at that time acted in the position of Surveyor-General. It quickly became obvious that he was competent, meticulous, honest and hard-working. Over the twenty years of his working life in New South Wales, he was almost continuously on expeditions to survey land grants all around Greater Sydney and even the exploration of territories into which Europeans had not travelled.⁷

We might add here, that at the time, James Meehan was probably the most prominent and well-respected Catholic in the Colony. He was one of that small group of former convicts who played an important part in the affairs of the colony during Lachlan Macquarie’s governorship. Of James Meehan, the Governor wrote in 1812 that he was “a most excellent Land Surveyor ... a Man of strict Honour and Integrity...”⁸

From 1809, a considerable number of the 1798 men had received either full or conditional pardons from the Crown and had acquired land either by government grant or purchase. This land formed a concentration to the south-west of Sydney, around and beyond Liverpool. It was not a coincidence; the whole operation of opening up and settling these areas was arranged by James Meehan himself, who evidently considered that the district possessed distinct advantages for himself and his fellow Irishmen. The role played by James Meehan in creating the pattern of Irish Catholic settlement in the colony from about 1810 to 1821 was decisive. Having

6 “Saint Mary’s Cathedral Sydney A memoir of its destruction by fire”, Sydney 1865, as quoted in *Saint Mary’s Cathedral 1821 – 1971* (Patrick O’Farrell, editor). This was a report of a public meeting held in Sydney on 6th July, 1865, in response to the tragic destruction by fire of old Saint Mary’s Cathedral a week previously.

7 Some years later in his testimony to the Bigge Commission of Enquiry, Meehan declared that “I have measured every farm that has been measured” since August 1803. Apart from fixing the boundaries of land grants James Meehan made several contributions to the mapping of the colony, most notably a map of Sydney drawn in 1807, and he surveyed the townships of Richmond, Castlereagh, Windsor, Pitt Town, Wilberforce, Liverpool and Bathurst in New South Wales, as well as Hobart in Tasmania.

8 An extract from Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s testimonial for the appointment of James Meehan as Deputy Surveyor General (Despatch to the Earl of Liverpool, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, 17th November 1812), as cited in *James Meehan: A Most Excellent Surveyor*, by Tony Dawson.

arranged for his own grant of land at Macquarie Fields (now Ingleburn) Meehan seems to have persuaded those compatriots to settle in that district of the colony.⁹

Consequently, the Catholics to whom Father Therry came to minister in 1820 were far from being entirely an impoverished serfdom. These 1798 men soon achieved a middle-class prosperity. Some of them were the members of the Catholic Chapel Committee.

Since two members of the Catholic Chapel Committee were also officials of the Colony's Government, namely James Meehan and John Thomas Campbell, we may assume that there was some type of "behind the scenes" discussion with the Governor about the granting of a plot of land for the Chapel and about its location. It seems that within days of the formation of the Committee, the Governor intimated certain areas where he would be disposed to make a grant. Just ten days after being elected, the Committee prepared a letter on the subject. The letter was written by Father Therry and signed by most members of the Committee. It was addressed to John Thomas Campbell in his role as secretary to the Governor. The committee suggested that the "Government ground, situated between Saint Philip's Church, Charlotte Place and the Military Barracks is, in every respect, the most eligible of all the plots of ground from which His Excellency the Governor, has had the goodness to offer a selection for that purpose."¹⁰

There was no reply to the Committee's letter for a full five weeks and in the meantime, for reasons not entirely clear, the Governor changed his mind:

The Governor is sorry he cannot allow the Roman Catholic Chapel to be built on the Site herein solicited in Charlotte Place, the ground in question being reserved for Govt. Public Buildings.

L.M. [Lachlan Macquarie].

N.B. The Deputy Surveyor General has received the Governor's orders to point out some other eligible Place in the Town of Sydney for the Catholic Chapel to be built on.

Parramatta L. M.

19th August 1820

Did James Meehan advise the Governor against a grant of land for the Chapel in

⁹ A fuller assessment of James Meehan's role in the distribution of grants is given by the historians James Waldersee, Patrick O'Farrell and Bernard O'Dowd.

¹⁰ There were three members of the Catholic Chapel Committee who did not sign the petition to the Governor. Two are entirely explicable, since they held responsibilities both in Government and on the Committee, namely James Meehan and John Thomas Campbell. The third absent name is much less explicable: the senior Catholic Chaplain, Father Philip Conolly. The petition, dated 10th July 1820 and with Governor Macquarie's reply written across it, is preserved in the State Archives of NSW.

what was then the hub of Sydney town? The speech given by Father McEncroe in 1865 (recounting his discussion with another Committee member, William Davis) suggests so. It would seem more likely, however, that the Governor sought alternative advice on where the Catholic Chapel should be built (or not built), not just the views of members of the Chapel Committee (including James Meehan).

The Governor's decision does not seem to be well received by the Committee members and it is presumed that a great deal of further discussion took place as to where the chapel should be situated. Such discussion dragged on for months. An indicator of the lack of consensus amongst the Committee was an advertisement which appeared in *The Sydney Gazette* in April 1821.¹¹ This startling notice was placed by another member of the Chapel Committee and greatly respected Colonial Catholic, William Davis. But he does not seem to be writing on behalf of the Committee, but in his own name. There is something else surprising about it: Davis makes clear that he is willing to purchase a suitable plot of land. So, what about Governor Macquarie's promise of a grant of land the previous August? Some light is thrown on the matter by the following comments of John Thomas Bigge, who was resident in New South Wales at the time, conducting a commission of enquiry into the affairs of the Colony on behalf of the British Government. Bigge wrote that he observed "some difference of opinion arose among the Catholics themselves respecting the situation of the allotment and the preference that had been given to the town of Sydney."¹²

The account of Archdeacon McEncroe's speech, cited earlier, together with the advertisement of April 1821 in *The Sydney Gazette* and the comments of Mr Commissioner Bigge, when considered together, indicate that William Davis was the dissenting party in discussions over the location of the land for the Catholic Chapel.

As a man who had been a faithful Catholic since his arrival in the Colony as a political prisoner twenty years before, William Davis had been an elder of the Catholic Community in those dark years when there were no priests to provide the Sacraments. His home in Charlotte Place had been a centre of private Catholic

11 "Wanted, an Allotment of Ground in Sydney as a Site for a Roman Catholic Chapel. Any written Proposal which shall described the most eligible Situation, and mention reasonable Terms, will be received and immediately attended to, by William Davis, Charlotte-place Sydney. The Extent of the required allotment must be at least 120 feet by 90."

12 Part of a letter by Mr Commissioner Bigge as cited in the article, *Old Saint Mary's*, by J.P. McGuanne (1915). Mr McGuanne's paper was originally a lecture given in Sydney in 1913.

devotion in Sydney. It is not surprising that he took the view that the more centrally-located Charlotte Place was the most appropriate place for the Catholic Chapel to be built. It had the added advantage of being immediately adjacent to his residence! It was not, of course, built there in 1821, but only twenty years passed before a **second** Catholic chapel for Sydney was needed and it was built in Charlotte Place. It still stands today, of course: Saint Patrick's Church Hill.¹³

At some point between August 1820 and November 1821, James Meehan selected a plot of land for the location of the Catholic Chapel at the North-east corner of what is now Hyde Park and subsequently measured it out himself. Having persuaded members of the Chapel Committee of the merits of the location, he obtained Governor Macquarie's approval for the selection. It most likely, however, that the Governor already had had some say in where that grant would be. The land selected was not the most prestigious area of Sydney town and nor was it the least.

The sylvan common now known as Hyde Park was unreclaimed scrub at the time of European settlement in 1788. As early as 1803, the area was associated with sporting activities, including cricket, boxing

and horse racing, as well as popular games for families. Governor Macquarie was anxious to secure the land for public recreation, and exclude commercial activity. He recognised it as a public space with a proclamation in 1810, naming it *Hyde Park*. From 1817, a number of important new buildings began to take shape skirting around the northern end of Hyde Park, and all designed by Governor Macquarie's favoured architect, Francis Greenway. First constructed was the barracks for convicts (now known simply as *The Hyde Park Barracks*), then Saint James' Anglican Church and the Law Courts. Two hundred years later, the excellence of these buildings is undisputed.¹⁴



The engraving of Francis Greenway which once appeared on the Australian \$10 note.

¹³ The land on which Saint Patrick's Church was built from 1840, was donated to the church by William Davis and part of the land of his Charlotte Place residence.

¹⁴ Although intended as a place of incarceration for prisoners, the impressive style and

Partly encouraged by the Governor, who did not regard public buildings solely from the point of view of their utility, in the aspirations of Francis Greenway, these buildings were part of a plan for a vast city square extending eastward from what is now the Sydney Town Hall. Some years later, Francis Greenway wrote a letter to newspaper *The Australian* outlining his concept that Hyde Park would be “given to the inhabitants of Sydney for ever, and to be laid down in the most elegant style of landscape gardening.” It would be planted out “in the modern way of landscape gardening, as many of the squares are now in London, the garden enclosed with an elegant rail fence”.¹⁵

When seen in the light of Greenway’s great plan, the selection of a plot of land on the eastern side of this proposed civic area does not seem at all like the caricature that Catholics were fobbed-off with a useless parcel of land in an undesirable area. This point was also made by the editor of *The Sydney Gazette* in his article about the laying of the foundation stone of Saint Mary’s Chapel:

The site chosen for the erection of this edifice, which is intended to be spacious as well as handsome, lies to the east of Hyde Park, the front of the chapel facing the town. The spot in every way appears extremely eligible, and there can hardly be a doubt entertained but that the structure, when completed, will join with the other superb buildings in that attractive end of the town, in affording additional and consistent beauty to the rapidly-improving Australian capital.¹⁶

The plot of land, which was more or less square, and almost one hectare, was a sizeable tract of land, but it was also rocky and had a decided slope downward from the level plain of Hyde Park.¹⁷ For the purposes of buildings, this would pose some significant problems. The grant was partly unreclaimed bush, and close to

scale of the Hyde Park Barracks acts as an effective terminus to Macquarie Street, which was formed during Governor Macquarie’s tenure. The Houses of Parliament, Sydney Hospital and the Mint Building were also part of Macquarie’s building program.

- 15 Part of a letter to the editor of *The Australian* of 28th April 1825. Greenway published a series of letters to this newspaper, defending his work and outlining his plans for the future of Sydney town. His plans for a Sydney square had been fully developed during the period of his collaboration with Governor Macquarie.
- 16 *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* Saturday 3rd November 1821. Some historians have commented on the Gazette’s assessment of the land grant almost mockingly. But perhaps it might be accepted at face value.
- 17 It seems that the precise measurements of the grant were not documented until as late as 1834, after a protracted dispute, which is a story in itself. The grant was finally settled at being 2 acres, one rood and five perches (being in metric measure, 0.92 hectares). This was almost four times the area that would have been available for a grant in Charlotte Place.

tracks which lead to Woolloomooloo, Darlinghurst and beyond to South Head. Although not looked upon with enthusiasm at the time, in only a couple of decades it was realised that the site of Saint Mary's was both very suitable for its purpose and admirable in its position. Catholics in Sydney and Australia have benefitted enormously from James Meehan's wise judgement and foresight.

The anecdote quoted earlier – which Archdeacon McEncroe publicly repeated – about the selection of the site, is rather unfair in apportioning negative responsibility to James Meehan. Meehan was a hard-working, skilful, effective and upright man and he was also a very generous donor to the fund to build the Catholic Chapel. Over the twenty years from 1800, James Meehan would have seen the tremendous growth in the settlement of Europeans. It is reasonable to assume that he understood that the Catholic community would require more land than the immediate need for a rather small chapel. The point needs to be emphasised that had the Catholic community been given a plot of land in the more densely settled area of Sydney town, it would have been very much smaller in size and with little capacity to accommodate the expansion of the Catholic community.

Foundation Day 1821

The great occasion in the history of the Church in Australia and for Sydney took place on Monday 29th October, 1821.¹⁸ It was on that day that the foundation stone was set in place for the first Catholic Church in the Colony of New South Wales; and a grand day it was. The Governor, with Mrs Macquarie and all the members of his staff in dress uniforms, walked from Government House to Hyde Park for the ceremony at 1 o'clock, witnessed by a large number of Sydney residents, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Catholics from more distant settlements travelled to be present for the occasion. Preparations had been in train for some time, but it was only on short notice that the date was set. Somewhat daringly, Father Therry sent a letter to Governor Macquarie notifying him that the ceremony would occur, and inviting him to lay the first stone. Governor Macquarie had laid the first stone of many buildings in the Colony, including some Anglican churches, but certainly not a Catholic building.

Father Therry's invitation was strategic and of the greatest importance to the

¹⁸ The day selected by Father Therry for the founding of the Colony's Catholic Chapel was All Saints' Day 1821. It is most likely that he chose it to coincide with the Feast. On 20th October, the Secretary replied that the Governor would "be very happy to have the honour of laying the first stone of the intended Roman Catholic Chapel", but stipulated that it could not be on the proposed date. Consequently, Monday 29th October was chosen by the Governor.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL

On Monday last the First Stone of the first Roman Catholic Chapel, in this part of the world, was laid in the presence of a vast assemblage of respectable persons, who were anxious to witness so important and interesting a ceremony. The site chosen for the erection of this edifice, which is intended to be spacious as well as handsome, lies to the East of Hyde Park, the front of the Chapel facing the Town. The spot in every way appears extremely eligible; and there can hardly be a doubt entertained but that the structure, when completed, will join with the other superb buildings in that attractive end of the Town, in affording additional and consistent beauty to the rapidly improving Australian capital. HIS EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR performed the grateful ceremony; for which purpose a very handsome Silver Trowel had been prepared by Mr. Clayton, which was adorned with an appropriate inscription. "St. Mary's Chapel" was the designation which this intended place of worship received from HIS EXCELLENCY. The Reverend Mr. THERRY's Address on the occasion, and HIS EXCELLENCY's Answer, have been transmitted to us for insertion, and are subjoined for the information of the Public.

progress of the Catholic Faith in the Colony; but it was also somewhat unusual. If we were to accept at face value the coverage from *The Sydney Gazette*, the occasion was purely civic.¹⁹ The ceremony for laying the first stone of a Catholic Church is not a civic ceremony, however, but a rite of the Church, usually performed by a bishop. Various accounts give us details about the rite which Father Therry carried out that day and, piecing together those accounts, it most likely was *The Rite of the Blessing and*

*Laying of the Foundation Stone for the Building of a Church.*²⁰

19 *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* Saturday 3rd November 1821.

20 Four accounts survive of the proceedings of the Foundation Day in 1821, the first being from *The Sydney Gazette*. Columbus Fitzpatrick's published letters from 1865 are well-known. Then we have the report of Archbishop WB Ullathorne. Father Ullathorne arrived in Australia in 1833 as Vicar-General. In later years, he wrote his memoirs, which were published initially during his life, but significantly revised after his death. His memoir also preserved some details of the foundation of Saint Mary's. These are in the form of testimony repeated to him by Catholics present on the day in 1821. Lastly, there is a letter to the *Freeman's Journal* from 23rd September 1915 in which a Mr A.T. Dwyer recounts a conversation with an old man who had been present on the Foundation Day. From the details found in these three accounts, it is certain that a choir sang the chants appointed in the liturgical books at the Foundation stone ceremony. They also indicate that Father Therry celebrated the Rite in his "sacerdotal vestments" and by this is probably meant his cassock, surplice and stole. This may not seem so very remarkable, except when one recalls that at the time, Catholic priests were forbidden by law to appear in public in priestly attire.

A letter written in 1865 by Columbus Fitzpatrick (a ten-year old boy who assisted Father Therry at the 1821 ceremony) confirms that the occasion was far from a civic ceremony, and that singing of the chants set down in liturgical books was observed.²¹ An important detail is that the celebration of Mass was part of the occasion, although this took place distinct from the Foundation Stone Rite, and certainly not in the presence of the Governor.

Given the presence of the protestant Governor, it may be that Father Therry was inclined to modify the rite so as not to offend sensibilities. As it was, it is recorded that Macquarie did attract a great deal of criticism for assisting at this Catholic ceremony.²²

What follows is an outline of the rite which is presumed to have taken place that day, together with the text of particular prayers that were likely to have been recited.²³

The ceremonial stipulates that the foundation stone or corner stone was to be square (i.e. not rough-hewn) and to be laid upon stone footings by the celebrant. It also supposes that a large timber Cross – suggested to be two metres in height – was to be erected beforehand on the site of the intended church and this Cross was to signify that place where the altar of the church would be erected. The foundation stone was to be laid at this place. Of the details that have been preserved, there is no evidence that such a Cross had been erected, but we cannot say that it was not put up. The Cross was to be blessed with holy water, whilst Psalm 83 was sung.

Attention would then have been focussed on the first stone, which was intended to be part of the structure of the wall, rather than a commemorative feature. The following is a translation of the prayer which invokes God's blessing over the stone and was almost certainly said by Father Therry on that occasion:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, you, true God Almighty,
brightness and image of the Eternal Father, and Eternal life; you who are the

21 The choir that sang at the ceremony had been formed by Mrs Catherine Fitzpatrick and Mr Maguire in 1818 and had become very accomplished. Whether the music they provided for the Liturgy was sung to the Gregorian melodies or to other compositions (probably somewhat operatic), we cannot be certain. The choir formed in 1818, continued in various forms to accompany the Sacred Liturgy at Saint Mary's Church - later Cathedral – and does so until this day. An interesting essay about this devout and dedicated Catholic pioneer can be found here:
<https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/gleesoncatherinefitzpatrick.pdf>

22 Criticism of Governor Macquarie is detailed in a letter of Columbus Fitzpatrick 3rd July 1865 published in *The Southern Argus* (Goulburn).

23 This centuries-old rite is found in the second volume of *The Roman Pontifical*, originally published by Pope Clement VIII in 1596.

corner-stone cut out without hands from the mountain, and the unchanging foundation; fix firmly this stone to be laid in your name. We pray you, O Beginning and End, the Beginning from which the Father created all things before all ages, be the beginning, advancement and completion of this work which is to be undertaken for the praise and glory of your name.²⁴

The celebrant was then to sprinkle the stone with Holy Water and trace the Sign of the Cross upon each face of the stone. The rite indicates that the Litany of the Saints was to be sung after this and then Psalm 126. It was at this point that the stone was put in place, with the assistance of a stone mason. This would have been the moment when Governor Macquarie used the trowel presented to him for the occasion and the short addresses made.

In the Rite found in *The Roman Pontifical*, the celebrant turns his attention away from the foundation stone towards the entire site of the intended church. He is to bless the outline of the building, walking around it sprinkling the area with holy water whilst Psalms 50, 86 and 121 were sung in succession.²⁵

The hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*,²⁶ was then appointed to be sung whilst the celebrant prays that the Holy Spirit will come down upon the building which is about to rise from the ground, that He would make acceptable the offerings of clergy and people, and purify the hearts of the faithful. The last petition is that the building itself may endure forever as an unfailing source of heavenly blessings.

Columbus Fitzpatrick, in just one sentence of his letter, confirms that the Rite described above was celebrated that day:

The trenches [marking the line of the intended walls of the building] were dug out, and a large quantity of stone placed on the ground; a marquee was erected, in which Mass was celebrated, and a procession formed which made a round of the site, while the choir chanted the various hymns appropriate for the occasion.²⁷

As mentioned above, *The Sydney Gazette* recorded the speeches given by Governor Macquarie and Father Therry before the ritual of laying the First stone of the chapel

24 Translation of the prayer by the author of this article.

25 The extent to which this part of the Rite was observed in 1821 is a moot point, since at this time no definite plan for Saint Mary's existed, only some ideas about its size and design.

26 The ancient hymn to the Holy Spirit, *Come O Creator, Spirit blest*.

27 Columbus Fitzpatrick's reminiscences were published in *The Goulburn Argus* in 1865, immediately after the fire which destroyed old Saint Mary's. They are an invaluable source of information, since he was an intelligent and observant boy and then young man, frequently in the company of prominent Catholics and sometimes the service of the priests Father O'Flynn, Father O'Connolly and Father Therry from 1817 onwards.

commenced. Father Therry said, in part:

... We, the Catholics of this Colony, cannot refrain, on so auspicious an occasion, from expressing our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to Your Excellency, for having deigned to honour us, by personally laying the first Stone of the First Roman Catholic Chapel attempted to be erected in this Territory.” Father Therry continued “In the Temple which you now commence, prayers shall be frequently offered to the Throne of God, to invoke upon yourself, and your amiable Family, the richest blessings of Heaven; and we venture to predict, that, whilst it shall continue to be appropriated to the sacred use for which it is intended, neither the Name, nor the Virtues of Your Excellency, shall at any time be forgotten.

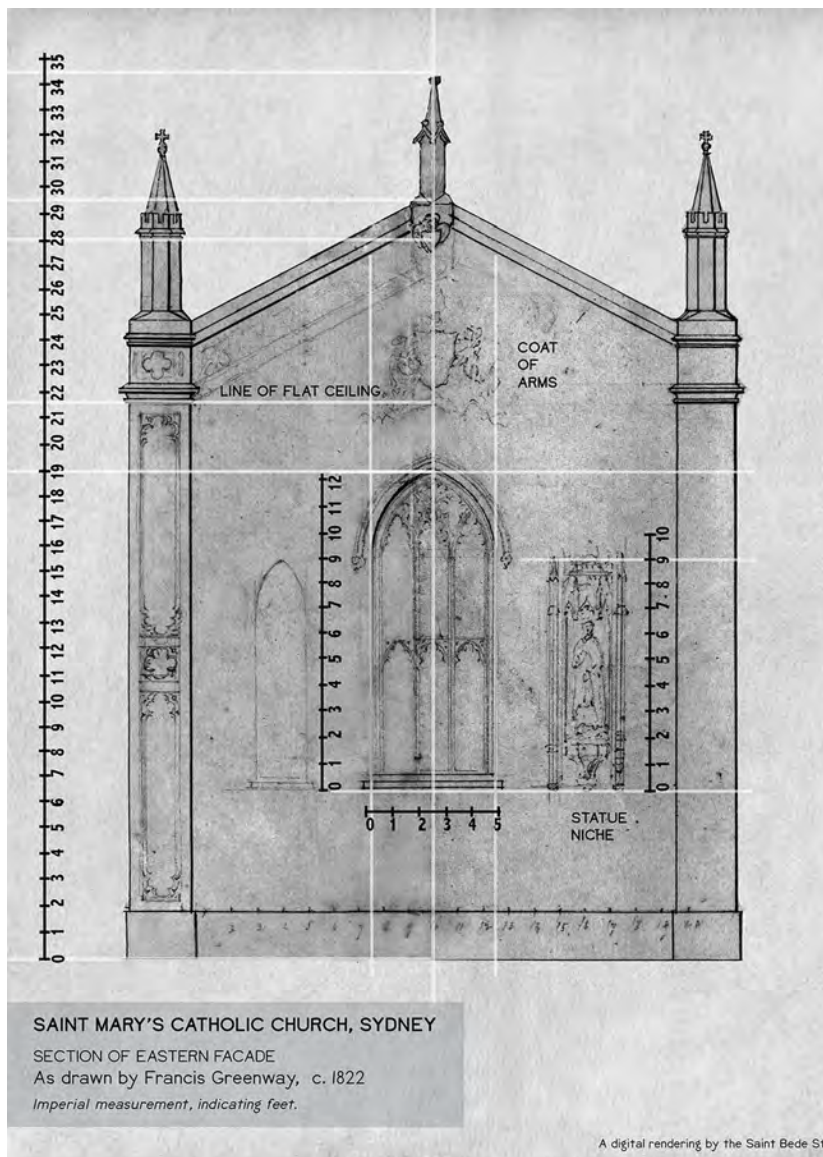
This is part of the Governor’s reply:

...I receive from your hands, with much pleasure, in your own name, and that of your Roman Catholic Brethren of New South Wales, the very handsome Silver Trowel now presented to me; and I feel myself much honoured in having been thus selected to make use of this Instrument in laying the First Stone of the first Roman Catholic Chapel attempted to be erected in Australia.²⁸



The silver trowel used by Governor Macquarie to lay the foundation stone of Saint Mary's Church, 1821. Image : The State Library of NSW.

28 *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* Saturday 3rd November 1821. Governor Macquarie’s name did appear on the completed chapel, as Father Therry promised to the Governor on the day the foundation stone was laid.



Enhanced section of Francis Greenway's drawing of Saint Mary's Chapel circa 1822. The measurements (in feet) are indicated on the drawing. Image : The Therry Papers in the State Library of NSW.

The language of both addresses is of another age, but important points are made both by Father Therry and Governor Macquarie. Given the social and legal standing of Catholics at this time, it is unsurprising that the tone of Father Therry's address is deferential, but



The completed Saint Mary's Church as it appeared in the early 1840s. Image : The Saint Bede Studio.

in another part of the address, Father Therry suggests what Catholicism can add to the Colony of New South Wales, namely, social cohesion through the spread of Christian morality and mutual respect. In his turn, Governor Macquarie concluded his address by making a most important observation about his experience of the Catholics of the Colony, namely, that they are “Faithful and Loyal Subjects of the Crown.”

A few lines are not out of place here about the trowel that was used by Governor Macquarie to lay the cornerstone. “The Governor wiped the trowel with his own handkerchief, and put the trowel in his bosom, saying ‘You must know Mr Therry, that although I never laid the first stone of a Catholic church before, I am a very old Mason; and I shall keep this trowel as long as I live, in remembrance of this day, and I wish you and your flock every success in your pious undertaking.’ “These off-the-cuff remarks were recalled years later by Columbus Fitzpatrick, the altar boy who had held the trowel at the Foundation ceremony, before it was handed to the Governor.”²⁹

²⁹ In early 1822, Macquarie left Australia and returned to England, taking the trowel with him. In 1962, his descendants returned it to Australia where it remains preserved in excellent condition in the State Library of NSW. In 2022, it was lent for display in Saint Mary's Cathedral. The silver trowel was made and engraved by Samuel Clayton on only a week's notice. Clayton arrived in Sydney as a convict in December 1816 and was a talented portrait artist, engraver, art teacher and silversmith. He did very well for himself through hard work. Freemasonic devices are engraved on the trowel and the inscription reads: “The Capt. Gen. Governor & Commander in Chief, Vice Admiral, and Commander of the Forces in and over the Territory of New South Wales and its Dependencies. His Excellency Lachlan Macquarie Esq. Major General in the Army &c &c &c. Used this Instrument at the Ceremony of laying the first Stone of the first Catholic Chapel erected in the said Territory on the 29th day of Oct. A.D. 1821.”

Designing a chapel

Towards the end of 1821 (or perhaps in 1822), when fundraising for the Catholic chapel was proceeding well and the land for its construction allotted by a Crown Grant, the architect of the Colony of New South Wales, Francis Greenway was asked to prepare a design for the chapel. The Catholic Chapel Building Committee and Father Therry had reached a decision that they did not want a timber building, expedient to immediate needs, but something more substantial. This approach was supported by Father Therry's superior Monsignor Slater O.S.B. who lived on the island of Mauritius, and under whose jurisdiction the continent and islands of Australia then fell.³⁰

Francis Greenway was well-qualified to prepare a design for such a chapel; he had built several fine churches, in King Street, Sydney, at Windsor, and at Liverpool, all of which continue to be used as churches, two hundred years later.

The plan Greenway drew-up for the Catholic Chapel has survived and shows a charming design in that style called *Regency Gothick*.³¹ Although an imperfect expression of that Gothic style which emerged from England in the late 1830s and early 1840s, Francis Greenway's design for the Chapel demonstrates his knowledge of Gothic decoration. It resembled the type of little church frequently found in rural areas of England. It was intended to be a rectangular-shaped building - one large room - with beautifully detailed windows in stone and other ornaments carved in stone to enrich wall-surfaces, including provision for statues on the exterior wall at the altar-end of the building (the east).

Francis Greenway's drawing is only a glimpse of his design for Saint Mary's church. It depicts what the sanctuary (East) end of the building would have looked like and what a section of the south side would have looked like. It also depicts his

30 Monsignor Slater's letter, of 2nd October 1822 is in response to a letter sent to him in Mauritius by Father Therry in March 1822. It is clear from the letter that the intended size of the chapel was still a topic of disagreement amongst the Sydney Catholic Community. The letter is reproduced pp 51-53 of Father Eris O'Brien's biography of Father Therry, published in 1922.

31 At some point in 1821 or 1822, the Catholic Chapel Building Committee approached Francis Greenway to prepare a design for the intended Chapel. It has not been able to be determined whether Greenway was given this commission before the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Chapel in October 1821, or afterwards. The Greenway design has survived in the papers of Father Therry (now preserved by the State Library of NSW). It is large piece of paper, folded and with the words "Mr Greenway architect" written on the reverse of the drawings. The existence of this drawing had been forgotten about for many years, until it was uncovered by the architectural historians Joan Kerr and James Broadbent and published in their 1980 study of early colonial architecture *Gothick Taste in the Colony of New South Wales*. Even then, knowledge of Greenway's contribution to a design for the chapel remained largely overlooked.

intentions for the ceiling inside the building. That is all. It does not indicate how long the building was to be, nor what the Hyde Park (Western) façade would have looked like.

His drawing of the Eastern façade, however, is quite detailed, and the design indicates Greenway's understanding of the concept of *propriety*, namely that it was appropriate to enhance the area where the altar was to be placed with greater ornament. He designed a single East window opening divided by tracery³² into six compartments or *lights*.

There are further ornamental features of Greenway's design for this end of the building. The most notable are the elaborate statue niches carved from stone and set into the wall on either side of the central window. These niches Greenway designed with massive stone bases, carved to resemble leaves, and on which a statue was to be placed. An elaborate carved stone canopy covered the statues. Greenway even drew an idea for a statue for the niche: perhaps Christ or another saint. These statues were intended to be almost life size, just on five feet tall.³³

Francis Greenway's drawing also includes his design for the structure and ornament of the ceiling, within the building. We are given no other indication of the interior except this, so it was obviously of some importance to the overall design. Alternatives were proposed for the design of the ceiling, namely a flat plastered ceiling or a pitched ceiling of timbers.³⁴

This proposed timber ceiling was intended to be highly ornamental. The structure of rafters, running from the top of wall to the apex of the roof, would have been of polished timber, and the trusses – which would have corresponded to the position on the exterior walls of the stone buttresses, would have been segmented with curved timber members, each end of which was to feature carved timber and projecting ornaments called *bosses*. To use another technical term, what Greenway designed was a *hammer beam* ceiling. This was to be a grand structure, very much better than the ceilings of the other churches (Anglican) in Sydney at that time.

32 *Tracery* describes the timber or stone members which divide the glazing into separate and ornamental compartments.

33 And over all of these, Greenway intended to be placed the coat-of-arms of Great Britain, as with other public buildings of the Colony of New South Wales he designed. It would be safe to suggest that the coat-of-arms concept did not appeal greatly to Father Therry.

34 As Greenway explained in writing on the plan: "The pencil lines of the section of one of the rafters shews in what manner the roof might be done in wood only when the end window could be kept higher but such a roof would be attended with much more expense in completing than a flat ceiling yet it would be much more in character with the stile [sic] of the building."

All these architectural details, whilst interesting in themselves, are not the primary point of this description. The drawing is of great historical significance for at least two reasons. The first is that these finer, elegant Gothic details of Greenway's design were completely swept aside by Father Therry and his clerk of works James Dempsey. Were they perhaps deemed too costly to be incorporated? But those finer details were intended to create a chapel – even though it was small – which was distinctly ecclesiastical and mediaeval in appearance. What came to be built was neither. The second reason is that these details reveal that Francis Greenway was quite familiar with the finer points of Gothic ornament and was capable of employing them in his designs. His surviving churches bear little resemblance to his admirable and quite Catholic design for Saint Mary's chapel.

Being the type of person he was, Greenway not only designed the appearance of the building, but determined how large it should be, based on his own views of the needs of the Catholic population, rather than the opinions of his clients. Some interesting observations about this approach were written by Columbus Fitzpatrick:

Father Therry, who was a far-seeing man, would not be satisfied with a small one [chapel]. This led to dissension among the Catholics, many of whom could not enter into his views or see any necessity for so large a church as he intended to build. Among these was Mr. Greenaway [sic] the architect, employed to make the plans. He said, what was true, that Father Therry was but a young man and did not know what such a building would cost, that any one must be mad who suppose that the Catholics of Sydney would require such a building for the next hundred years at least. Many such arguments were used by well-disposed persons, but Father Therry was firm, and at last his plan was adopted by the Catholic Committee.³⁵

Francis Greenway's design did not win the favour of Father Therry. It has usually been suggested that the principal reason for the disagreement between these two determined men was that the chapel Greenway designed would be too small for anything other than the immediate needs of the mainly-convict Catholic population. It is true that Father Therry was more far-sighted; but he also had his own ideas about how that chapel should look and they did not correspond to Francis Greenway's

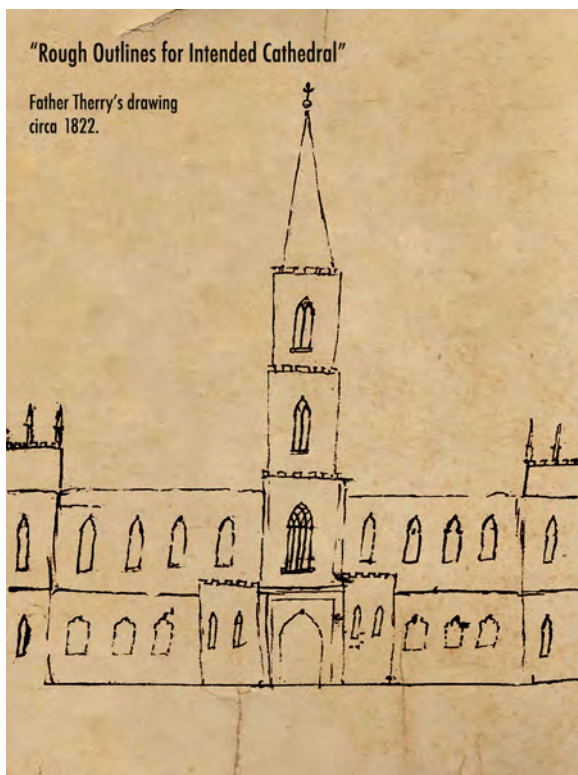
³⁵ Columbus Fitzpatrick *op.cit.* It is most likely that Columbus Fitzpatrick condensed an ongoing debate about the size of the Chapel, rather than reporting a particular meeting in which a decision was reached after discussion by those present. Monsignor CJ Duffy, however, took an alternative view that the whole matter was discussed at the first meeting of 30th June 1820. This seems highly unlikely. His view is found in O'Farrell *op.cit.* "The Ethos of St. Mary's", p 39. Greenway's design for the Catholic Chapel reveals his intention of providing a building less than half the size of the Anglican Church of Saint James, across Hyde Park in King Street, designed by Greenway in 1819.

efforts. At much the same time Father Therry prepared his own design which he described as *Rough Outlines for Intended Cathedral*. His quirky effort – a crude sketch which he drew in pen and ink between 1821–22 – did not, thank God, get off the drawing-board.³⁶ Many things, however, are noteworthy from this sketch. The first is that the design is referred to as a “Cathedral”, namely the church which is the seat of a bishop. In 1821, the notion of Australia having a bishop – let alone a Catholic bishop – would to most people have seemed far-fetched. There were only a few ministers of Religion and but one Catholic priest on the Australian mainland:

what on earth would be the use of a Bishop? Evidently Father Therry had great aspirations indeed; this large church would one day be the seat of a Catholic bishop. And indeed, it became so, only thirteen years later.

Another aspect of note from the “Rough Outlines” is that it certainly depicts a building in the Gothic style – well, at least, a rather basic form referred to then (and since) as *Gothick*.³⁷

This was the style of late and post-mediaeval rural churches in Ireland and



One of Father Therry's designs for old Saint Mary's.

³⁶ The whereabouts of the original sketch is not presently known, but it was reproduced in Father Eris O'Brien's biography of Father Therry, published in 1922.

³⁷ The term *Gothick* came to be used of a revived style of architecture of the 18th century. This revival was part of a romantic movement in the arts and architecture and was initially domestic rather than ecclesiastical. These romantic beginnings gave away to a more scholarly attempts to reproduce mediaeval architecture. This second school is called *The Gothic Revival*.

England, but it certainly was not the architecture found in the colonial town of Sydney. So, we see that Father Therry wished the Catholic chapel to be set apart; he wished it to be large and he wished it to be in a more ancient form of ecclesiastical architecture. It was to look like the old churches that Irish Catholics knew. One senses that Father Therry's interest in this style of architecture was not a fashionable romanticism, but a deep desire to honour, even revive, an Irish Catholic heritage on the far side of the world. Consequently, stylistic correctness was not important to him so much as the general "look and feel" of old Catholic Ireland. Would Father Therry have shown his *Rough Outlines* to architect Francis Greenway? If he did, it would most likely have been treated with contempt and even mockery.

Yes, stylistic "correctness" was lacking; the "rough outlines" indicate – somewhat painfully – that Father Therry had no idea of Gothic architecture whatever. His "Rough Outlines" reveal a strange hybrid between the *Gothick* style and a domestic style of architecture, which we would call *Colonial* or *Georgian*. The large building he sketched out looks more like an English manor house than it does a church. This style, with its layers rising upward, is often referred to as *Wedding Cake Gothic*. Studying its oddities, one is not quite sure which end of the building is which. A three-storey tower with a spire is in the centre of the drawing. We also find that the main body of the church has two storeys of windows. And all the windows are pointed at the apex, in the *Gothick* style. Crenellations, giving the appearance of battlements, are also depicted.

An important question presents itself: how did Father Therry come up with the *Rough Outlines* design and, indeed, the eventual design to which old Saint Mary's was built? Answering this properly belongs to a further article which traces the history of the spasmodic years in which old Saint Mary's was constructed.

The initial work on Old Saint Mary's began early in 1822 and involved a great deal of time and expense in providing level foundations and creating a basement area. This was because the Grant of land sloped down from the flat area of Hyde Park and was uneven throughout. It was not until the second half of 1823 that the walls themselves began to be laid above ground level. With that construction well underway during 1823, a disgruntled Francis Greenway wrote to Father Therry, advising that he could not offer further assistance:

Dear Sir,

You have my reasons already fully explained, for my withdrawing that which I considered no longer of use, my services; I can assure you, Sir, however, that I have no resentment, and only lament that the designs have

been so much injured and that I had not the power to render that service for which I had first hoped, I should have; and I am now ready on the same terms, without emolument, to do everything in my power, to forward the object, and I shall feel myself amply remunerated, if I am so happy as to give you satisfaction.

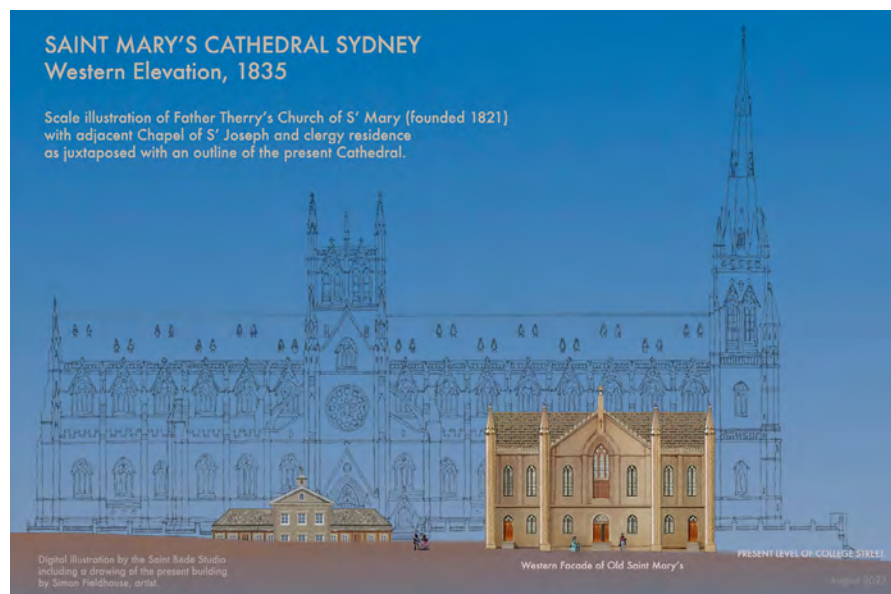
Your sincere friend and obedient servant,

Francis Greenway.

11th November 1823³⁸

The letter obviously is not Greenway's first to Father Therry on the subject and is a response to a reply he had received from Father Therry. Unstated is that someone else was directing what was being built. Closing his reply, Greenway offers an olive branch: he would continue to assist if his design were adhered to and not altered by Father Therry or anyone else. That olive branch was not accepted by Father Therry and the altered design continued to be built.

We must consider the possibility that the surviving drawing in the State Library was not Greenway's only design for the Chapel. Perhaps he was persuaded



Elevation of Old and New Saint Mary's juxtaposed: Image : The Saint Bede Studio.

38 The letter of Francis Greenway to Father Therry, which is among the Therry Papers held in the State Library of NSW, is cited in MH Ellis' 1949 biography of Francis Greenway on page 169. Ellis had seen the actual letter.

to consider the views of his clients and prepare an alternative design for a larger building, which included transepts and an apse (which were built). But there is no evidence of Greenway's further involvement with the project. And so, his charming design for a Catholic Chapel was set aside in favour of a building more than three times the floorplan size, double the height and, in every detail, quite unlike what Greenway had devised.

Conclusion

The story of the founding of old Saint Mary's, Sydney, encompasses the practical and public support of the Government and its officials, the generosity of a number of non-Catholic notables of Sydney and, most of all, the gathering-together of an incipient Catholic community. The enthusiasm, generosity and noble aspiration which emerged in the stages of planning the building, gave way to the crueller realities of inadequate funding (as Francis Greenway warned) and disagreement at all levels of the project. Whilst Father Therry provided leadership, the building of the Chapel is also the story of the important practical contributions of just a handful of people, mostly those men who had been exiled to Australia after the Uprising on the West Coast of Ireland in 1798. Their crucial contribution should never be forgotten.

IRISH CONVICTS AND SECTARIAN CONFLICT IN COLONIAL AUSTRALIA

Hugh Myers*

Good afternoon, and thank-you for the opportunity to present this lecture to the Catholic Historical Society, and my special thanks are due to Dr. Carmody for his assistance in making this presentation possible. This lecture was delivered online during the lockdown last year to the Aisling Society, and is here presented with some revisions and incidental ruminations.

So, this afternoon I will talk about the role of religion and social conflict in early colonial New South Wales, Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land – with a special emphasis on the experiences of men and women transported from Ireland, and how they were treated during this period.

Since 2017 I have been employed as Special Collections Advisor to the Australian Catholic University in North Sydney, and have been tasked with assembling a collection of books, manuscripts and historical artefacts on the history of the Catholic Church in Australia. This project was initiated by the former Vice-Chancellor Professor Greg Craven, who wished to create a special collection to preserve the history of Australian Catholicism.

Before commencing the primary presentation on Irish convict history, it would be fruitful to tell members of this Historical Society a little more about the collection, with a view to shedding light on how and why books were printed in early Colonial Australia. Relationships between printing, and the distribution of books and pamphlets, do influence our capacity to understand the social environment of Australia during the era of transportation.

First of all, a little about my background and how I came into the role of building a rare book library at the Australian Catholic University. I have worked for over twenty years as a professional antiquarian book-dealer, and during this time was employed by several Sydney booksellers including Richard Neylon and Hordern House. Some of you may remember Richard Neylon's bookshop in St. John's Road, Glebe, before he moved to rural Tasmania to commence an entirely online business. Richard is an excellent rare book dealer, being a reclusive misanthrope with a dry wit that make his catalogues unusually interesting and humorous.

* Hugh Myers is Special Collections Advisor at Australian Catholic University. This is the text of a talk given to the Australian Catholic Historical Society on 10 April 2022.

Hordern House have been long established as the pre-eminent antiquarian booksellers in Australia, and enjoy an international reputation for books on voyages, exploration and the history of science. I worked for this company for a decade, and much of this was in bibliographic research and writing the detailed catalogues for which this company is renowned. During this time, I was fortunate to handle many books printed in early Colonial Australia, and gained some familiarity with the early history of the colony.

While working at Hordern House I met Professor Greg Craven, then acting Vice-Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University, who is a dedicated book collector and bibliophile himself. In 2017 I returned to full-time study, commencing a two-year Masters by Research degree at the department of Social Anthropology at Macquarie University. When I commenced studies Professor Craven invited me to begin building the new collection of Catholic history books and manuscripts at the Australian Catholic University.

This collection is now in its fifth year of development and numbers over 1,700 items encompassing books, pamphlets, manuscripts, printed ephemera, historical artefacts and curios. As far as I know, this is the only institutional collection in Australia assembled by a former professional antiquarian bookseller. Much of it has been purchased from other book-dealers, but I also spend a good deal of time and energy surveying auctions in Australia, Europe and North America. A smaller portion of the books have been donated to the collection, and I sincerely hope that significant donations continue in the coming years.

From the outset, the intention has been to create an archive of Australian social history relating to Catholic people. As such, it is not just a dry ecclesiastic and theological library, although these subjects are certainly included. Written material by interesting and significant Australian Catholics is actively sought, and this often includes literature, scientific publications and non-religious books. The date range commences in the late eighteenth century with the Laperouse priests and continues to the present day.

However, being an antiquarian book-dealer by profession, my inclination is towards rare nineteenth-century printing. Especially what would now be called ephemera or “occasional printing”. This includes small pamphlets, broadsides, posters, handbills, chapbooks, political flyers and such printed material that typically has a very poor survival rate over time. Sometimes such items are unrecorded by historians and bibliographers, and finding them in the first place requires considerable patience and experience. In colonial Australia, pamphlets

were a common way of disseminating information, especially when the subject at hand was immediate and contentious. And religion was one such point of regular conflict.

In this presentation I would like to provide some insights into the experience of Irish convicts, and to do this I will draw upon careful reading of a small numbers of books and pamphlets from the collection at the Australian Catholic University. It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive history of convict transportation from Ireland to the Australian colonies, but rather to use some carefully selected primary sources to give a sense of why ethnicity and religion were so terribly important in early colonial society.

And this brings me back to the ephemeral pamphlets and “occasional printing” already mentioned. When we survey Australian nineteenth-century printing related to religion, three primary types of material are readily apparent:

First of all are the Catholic books written by priests and prominent lay advocates of the Church.

Second are the written productions of the hierarchy of the Church of England. Given this was the preferred religion endorsed by the government in Colonial Australia, there is some overlap between religious and bureaucratic or administrative printing - when it relates to the activities of priests and members of the Church of England.

And third are the Protestants; including Congregationalists, Calvinists, Presbyterians and all manner of irregular evangelicals.

What I quickly discovered is that there is more Protestant religious printing in colonial Australia. A lot more, in fact, and there is a fairly simple explanation for why this is the case. Furthermore, intense sectarian rivalries are evident in Protestant printing in nineteenth-century Australia. It is routinely anti-Catholic and specifically anti-Irish, often written for maximum effect with ample bombast, vitriol and libel. To our eyes it appears defamatory and even downright racist, going so far as to depict the Irish as spiritually and constitutionally inferior to the other peoples of Great Britain.

Sectarianism, especially the Catholic-Protestant divide, has long been a source of bitter contention in Australian society. Indeed, it continued into the twentieth century and was certainly a major social division in the early life of my parent’s generation (that is, those born in the nineteen-forties and fifties). It was only in the mid-to-late nineteen seventies that Australian ecclesiastics made peace across the lines, and the issue of religious affiliation is no longer divisive and acrimonious in the same way as experienced by past generations.

But in colonial Australia, religious identity mattered a great deal. This was in large part due to the significant proportion of convicts who came from Ireland, the large majority of whom were Catholic.

But I digress from a question already posed: Why did colonial Protestants print so much compared to Catholics and Anglicans?

The hierarchy of the Church of England were associated with the government, being the priests of the official Christian religion of the colony. As such, they were disinclined to enter into controversy and political matters as it would complicate the role of the Anglican Church relative to the administrative authority of the State.

Conversely, the Catholic Church has a long-standing mechanism to keep its priests from entering public political conflict. This is achieved by the official approval of Catholic publications by a censor and a bishop (or his appointed emissary). Any book authored by a priest in his role as a representative of the Church requires this official endorsement before it can be printed. These may be familiar to you as the 'Nihil obstat' and 'Imprimatur' on the reverse of the title-page of a Catholic book. 'Nihil obstat' literally means 'no obstruction' and indicates the approval of a censor who has read the book and declared it free from doctrinal error or fallacy. The 'Imprimatur' is the endorsement of the Bishop, and means 'to be printed'.

So, ministers and deacons of the Church of England were tied to the temporal government of the colony, and Catholic priests were beholden to the universal government of the Catholic church. However, the Protestant evangelists had no such constraints, and could print relatively quickly and without bureaucratic hindrance.

Generally speaking, they were accountable to their own congregations and not to larger powers or principalities. Within the isolated and parochial context of the Australian colonies, personal charisma played a large part in the power and influence wielded by Protestant pastors over their congregations. These factors help us understand why there is so much Protestant printing in Colonial Australia; and why it is often fiery, spontaneous and idiosyncratic. And it is set against the Irish Catholic population of the Colony, especially the convicts who never elected to come to Australia in the first place.

And lastly, it is worth noting that there is more Protestant printing in colonial Australia for the simple reason that there are more Protestant ministers than Catholic priests. As we shall see, the Catholic Church was relatively slow to consolidate an ecclesiastic presence in Australia.

So, in assembling this new rare book collection, I have learned that some of the most informative and important early printed material on Australian Catholicism

was written by enemies of the Church, and not by supporters of it. Furthermore, the whole issue of being a Catholic in colonial Australia was intimately tied to Irish national identity. Prejudice against the Irish merges with a rejection of Catholicism as a legitimate religion. The issue of religion and ethnicity is seemingly inextricable, despite the fact that many Australian Catholics during colonial times were neither Irish nor transported convicts.

Anyhow, I hope that I had given you a sense of this collection development project, and would now like to move on to examining some of the wonderful rarities of the collection – especially those that relate to the conditions of Irish convicts.

A few quick facts to introduce the subject: a total of 165 thousand people were transported to the Australian colonies, the vast majority being sent to New South Wales or Van Diemen's Land (being present-day Tasmania). The first convict transports marked the beginning of formal British settlement in 1788, and transportation to the eastern Australian colonies ceased in 1853. Convict transportation and assigned labour continued on a much smaller scale in Western Australia up until 1868.

Approximately one third of those transported were Irish. Political prisoners, specifically those who fought and agitated for Irish freedom were actually the minority; and it has been statistically demonstrated that less than 1% of convicts sent to Australia from across the British Empire were charged with crimes of a 'political' nature such as sedition, conspiracy and so forth.

The overwhelming majority of Irish convicts were those convicted of stealing produce or livestock. They may not have been political prisoners in the formal sense of the word, but many were rendered poor and desperate by extractive English land-ownership in Ireland. The sharp increase in rural poor transported to Van Diemen's Land in the 1840s reflects a steady deterioration of conditions arising from overpopulation, alienation of good arable land, and seemingly inescapable cycles of intergenerational poverty. This dire situation culminated in the Great Famine when the potato blight struck Ireland with horrific consequences.

It is a curious fact that prior to 1840, very few Irish convicts were sent to Van Diemen's Land. This may have been due to the political influence wielded by Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur in London. However, when transportation to New South Wales ceased in 1840, large numbers of Irish were sent to Van Diemen's Land. This trend increased throughout the late 1840s due to political unrest and the famine. As we shall see, the state of the Catholic religion was poorly advanced in Van Diemen's Land, effectively leaving these convicts without proper access to organised religious services.

The experience of convicts sent to the Australian colonies was varied. Those with skills like mechanics and builders fared relatively well, for they were assigned to masters who valued their labour. Unskilled agricultural labourers were sent to work for settlers who often treated them poorly, and this was the fate of many Irish convicts in Australia. Secondary punishment for re-offenders included road building in chain gangs, or being sent to the dreaded establishments at Norfolk Island and Port Arthur.

One of the most powerful accounts of the Irish experience was written by the charismatic English Benedictine William Ullathorne. It is titled *The Catholic Mission in Australasia* and was published in 1837. Ullathorne is a remarkable man, who experienced a religious transformation in his youth and trained as a Benedictine under John Bede Polding, later the first Catholic Bishop in New South Wales. Polding and Ullathorne were committed to carrying out their mission to the convicts of Australia, and upon arriving in the colony in the mid-1830s were shocked by state of affairs they encountered.

What they found is that the vast majority of Irish Catholic convicts had little or no access to religion. Experience of mass, sacrament and confession were uncommon; with a small number of priests in a Colony of vast size and widely dispersed population. The situation in Van Diemen's Land was even worse, where the irascible Father Philip Conolly ministered from a slab hut during bitter winter cold and summer heat.

In the early years of settlement, some attempt by the authorities had been made to provide Irish Catholic convicts with Christian influence in the form of Anglican service. But this was typically spurned and rejected, leaving thousands of convicts in an effectively irreligious state of existence. Eventually permission was granted to allow Catholic priests in the colony, but not before covert attempts had been made to celebrate the Catholic religion in New South Wales.

In his book *The Catholic Mission in Australasia*, William Ullathorne describes one such renegade Irish priest. Ullathorne gives his identity as the 'Very Reverend Mr. Flinn' (spelt FLINN) but doubtlessly refers to Jeremiah Francis O'Flynn (with a Y), who arrived in New South Wales in November 1817. Father O'Flynn sailed for New South Wales without permission from the Colonial Secretary, and was promptly expelled by Governor Macquarie seven months later. He conducted covert masses, baptisms and confession during his short stay; and famously left behind a loaf of sacramental bread for the faithful.

Father O'Flynn had scant education and a poor grasp of the English language,

but William Ullathorne makes specific mention of his fluent and eloquent Gaelic. He writes that one old convict hand told him Father O'Flynn (and I quote)

had the sweetest and swiftest tongue of Irish that ever my ear heard

and that

he had never spoken one word of English until it was made fifty lashes to speak a word of Irish.

Such was the upset caused by Reverend O'Flynn's expulsion from the Colony, that Governor Macquarie was induced to grant a small stipend to two priests. Father John Joseph Therry came to New South Wales and Father Philip Conolly to Van Diemen's Land. But the resources of the two men were stretched thin. Very thin indeed.

William Ullathorne describes the pitiful condition of the Catholic religion in Hobart,

One solitary priest had lived there alone for many years, without even the opportunity of meeting a brother Priest. Not a single school. A wretched wooden shed, on the outskirts of Hobart Town, placed high up on the side of a lofty hill, not finished, no seat, not even a flooring board arranged and fastened, incapable of containing one half of the people – this was the only Catholic erection in Van Diemen's Land. Such a scene of religious desolation, of absolute desolation, has rarely been witnessed amongst a numerous Catholic population. The Governor was a man of a pious turn of mind, who thought Religion and education of the utmost value to everyone but a Catholic.¹

After more than a decade of toil, Father Conolly in Hobart took an instant dislike to William Ullathorne, who was not only unusually youthful in appearance; but also highly educated, eloquent and a brilliant intellectual to match. Indeed, Ullathorne had brought a personal library of over five hundred volumes with him to Australia.

Incidentally, I am pleased to report that the Catholic university collection has recently acquired a book from the personal library of Philip Conolly, with the front endpaper signed in full. This is a great rarity, as there is no evidence that Father Conolly owned an extensive library. Searching out books from the personal collections of early Catholic ecclesiastics has always been a collection development priority.

Likewise in New South Wales, the veteran priest John Joseph Therry was unimpressed by Ullathorne. But he quickly demonstrated a commitment to the

¹ William Ullathorne, *The Catholic Mission in Australasia* (Rockliff & Duckworth, Liverpool, 1837), 10–11; text at: https://books.google.com.au/books?id=_mANAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover

convict mission that won over his detractors.

And what a mission it was. Australians now are proud of their convict ancestry, and have a somewhat sentimental view of life in early colonial Australia. This perspective is stripped bare when reading Ullathorne's account of the colony. He describes a society of moral inversion – a place rife with violence, chronic alcoholism, prostitution and endemic criminality. It is an alarming description of human degradation and hopelessness.

Although born in Yorkshire and an Englishman by birth, William Ullathorne is sympathetic to the plight of the Irish convicts amongst whom he ministered. Some mention has already been made of how many Irish convicts came from straitened rural circumstances, and on this subject Ullathorne writes the following:

[For the year 1835] The entire number in actual bondage, is, in New South Wales, nearly 30,000, whilst in Van Diemen's Land there are nearly 20,000, to which must be added 3,000 for the penal settlements of Norfolk Island, Moreton Bay, and Port Arthur. It is to be further considered, that the great proportion of free inhabitants of these colonies consists of emancipists from a similar condition of bondage. Of all these, one-third are Irish Catholics, of whom many, if I except those in the large cities, have been transported for infringement of penal laws, for agrarian offences, and minor delinquencies; whilst those from England are, with rare exceptions, punished for direct aggression on property or the person. As, however, there is no distinction in the degree of punishment, they become mingled, contaminated and corrupted alike.²

But the most moving and persuasive sections of *The Catholic Mission in Australasia* concern his two visits to Norfolk Island. A place of great worldly beauty hid glaring atrocity, where the worst convicts in the system preyed upon the weak. In only 22 days Ullathorne heard some four hundred and fifty confessions, and here he learned of unspeakable and sadistic crimes, many of a sexual nature.

Ullathorne published *The Catholic Mission in Australasia* whilst on-leave in England in 1837. It ran into multiple editions, with thousands of copies printed in London, Liverpool and Dublin. It was translated into German, French, Italian and Dutch; and over 80,000 copies were distributed on the continent. He re-worked the text and published it under a different title, so disseminating thousands more copies; and even had the audacity to publish it in Sydney upon return to the colony.

In publishing this account of colonial Australia, William Ullathorne literally assaulted the moral conscience of British and European Christians. And not just

² Ullathorne, *The Catholic Mission*, 14–15.

Catholics, but people of all denominations were appalled by what they read. It is not just an account of transportation but a lament for Ireland and her convicts sent from home; a vast and eloquent rendition of British policy as a pernicious cosmic evil. It is worth remembering that at this time the Christian conscience of England was turning upon the Atlantic slave trade, and much of this humane sentiment was now directed against the system of convict transportation.

It is a curious fact that *The Catholic Mission in Australasia* is a very rare book despite being printed in vast numbers. This indicates it was passed from hand-to-hand until literally read to pieces. I have actively sought out a copy for many years now and have not been able to purchase one for the collection. A single copy of the Sydney edition was sold at auction in 2018 - but I foolishly missed this opportunity which may never again arise, given the rarity of this colonial edition.

However, I am pleased to report that recently Bishop James Foley of Cairns donated his personal copy of Ullathorne's *Catholic Mission in Australasia* to the University collection. Bishop Foley is a scholar and luminary, and we are deeply indebted to his generous donation. Bishop Foley's copy of Ullathorne's narrative is embedded within the annals of the Propaganda for the year 1838, and the book itself is here for you to peruse after the conclusion of my lecture.

William Ullathorne depicted the plight of the Irish convicts in a humane and sympathetic light. But other Colonists were not so forgiving, and paint a dramatically different picture. This brings us back to the issue raised previously, that Protestant ministers printed far more than their Anglican or Catholic counterparts. This skews the printed historical record against the Irish Catholic convict. Nonetheless, such vitriol printed against the Irish and the Church is still of great value in gauging the tone of colonial society. It may be unsettling to read material depicting the Irish as morally and constitutionally inferior, but this was the message spread from Presbyterian, Calvinist and other Protestant pulpits for decades during the era of convict transportation.

It is not my intention to depict Australian history in terms of a naive moral binary based upon religion. There is already a well-worn and enduring narrative that paints the Irish as the persecuted minority, as strangers in a strange land, beset by cruelty and affliction. This same narrative posits the Protestants as middle-class free settlers, sanctimonious and condescending in their approach to morality and religion. Such simplification quickly devolves into a naïve juxtaposition of Catholic ecclesiastics as frontline missionaries to the seemingly irredeemable, and Scottish Presbyterians as self-serving adherents of an essentially blinkered, parochial and grasping middle-class bent on materialistic aspirations.

Such a clear-cut binary is simply not accurate; for there were generous and progressive people on both sides of the divide. But it is easy to see how such a simplistic division has evolved from the heated ephemeral printing generated by Protestant ministers.

Two points are significant at this juncture:

First of all, it is important to understand the Protestant position in terms of the historical conditions of the period. Protestant settlers in New South Wales during the first decades of the nineteenth century struggled to form and propagate a moral community in a social environment they experienced as immoral. And more than just immoral, Colonial society was in many ways an inversion of right and wrong. Amongst the mass of the population sobriety was a rarity, rum formed a currency of exchange, marriage vows meant little, prostitution was rife, violence and intimidation was normal, and lies and perjury commonplace. Significant personal fortunes could be made from the rich resources and opportunities afforded in the colony, but it was a tough place to live.

The second point is the issue of personal charisma and ministers of religion. In any small community the nature and tone of religious observation is heavily influenced by the personality of the men who preach. This was certainly the case in the Australian colonies. For the most part, the early Catholic priests were charismatic but not inflammatory people. They could not afford to vex the Governors who were wary of their influence over the Irish section of the population. Conversely, Protestant preachers were typically charismatic, influential and fearless.

The Presbyterian community in Sydney was dominated for decades from the mid-1820s by the Reverend John Dunmore Lang. An irascible and energetic Scotsman, Dunmore Lang did more to fuel sectarian strife in colonial New South Wales than any other man. He spoke incessantly, preached with fiery conviction, meddled in politics, fathered a large family, organised immigration initiatives, and was repeatedly sued and jailed for libel in the course of his long and eventful life. For over half a century, Dunmore Lang taunted and provoked the Irish Catholics of the colony. He printed dozens upon dozens of books and pamphlets, often to promote his schemes for the emigration of upright and industrious Englishmen and Scots to Australia. Dunmore Lang was convinced of the inferiority of the Irish and their religion, and routinely depicts them as not only immoral but criminally inclined. Furthermore, he accuses the Irish of loyalty to Rome, and with these accusations spread fear of covert sedition and disloyalty to British rule.

Just one pamphlet gives a sense of Dunmore Lang's political agenda. Published

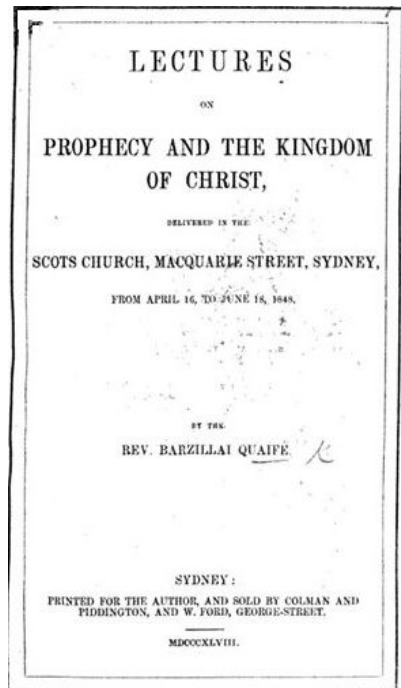
in 1841 by James Tegg in Sydney, the pamphlet is titled *The Question of Questions! Or, is the Colony to be Transformed into a Province of the Popedom? A Letter Delivered to the Protestant Landholders of New South Wales by John Dunmore Lang, Doctor of Divinity*.³ It comprises some 61 pages of verbose and scandalous anti-Irish racism and anti-Catholic bigotry; all of which is mixed up in a description of Lang's scheme for emigrating worthy mechanics from Scotland.

So far, I have acquired almost forty original Dunmore Lang pamphlets, broadsides and books for the collection at the Australian Catholic University. I believe that material printed by enemies of the Catholic Church is just as historically important as records left by defenders of the faith.

There are other eminent libraries of Catholic history in Australia, notably the Veech Library in Strathfield, the Dalton McCaughey Jesuit collection in Melbourne and the magnificent Benedictine library at New Norcia in Western Australia. But these are collections assembled by Catholic priests for the education and illumination of the faithful. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that the Protestant vitriol that fascinates historians is conspicuously absent from their shelves.

Anyhow, for some time I earnestly believed that Dunmore Lang held the record for the most inflammatory rhetoric in the Colony. This was until I had the good fortune to acquire a fabulous rarity by the Reverend Barzillai Quaife. That's right, the Reverend Barzillai Quaife. This sounds like a made-up name, but please do be assured it's real and not a figment of my imagination.

Anyhow, the Reverend Quaife was a Congregational missionary in New Zealand



Barzillai Quaife, Lectures on Prophecy and the Kingdom of Christ: Delivered in the Scots Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, from April 16 to June 18, 1848 (printed for the author, Sydney, 1848)

³ John Dunmore Lang, *The question of questions! or, Is this colony to be transformed into a province of the Popedom?: A letter to the Protestant landholders of New South Wales* (J. Tegg, Sydney, 1841).

until arriving in Sydney in 1844, where he came under the influence of Dunmore Lang and commenced preaching to the Scottish Presbyterian congregation in Parramatta and Sydney Town. During the late 1840s he printed a small number of books at his own expense, one of which is titled *Lectures on Prophecy and the Kingdom of Christ, Delivered in the Scots Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney*.⁴ The book is dated 1848.

Dunmore Lang was so heavily invested in the day-to-day catfighting of colonial politics, that he rarely paused to clarify the theological motivations for his anti-Catholic position. Conversely, Barzillai Quaife was concerned with providing a deep explanation for his congregation. In doing so, he provides historians with an extraordinary insight into mid-nineteenth century Presbyterian thinking. For Quaife, there could be only one ruler and one principality – namely the imminent Kingdom of the Resurrection of Christ. This means that all organised religion, all principalities and all forms of government were bogus and fraudulent perversions of power. The following quotation gives a sense of his enthusiasm:

Yet although entirely spiritual in its essence, Christ's Kingdom will comprise and control everything relating to human conduct. Hence the outward forms of society will undergo a vast and radical change, being regenerated by the same influence which governs and sanctifies the inner man. All that is inconsistent with Gospel principles in the polity of states must be abrogated. From this highly spiritual and purifying influence of evangelical piety it will inevitably result, that every government and political institution in actual existence will have to be either dissolved, or expurgated, for there is not one which does not contain elements at utter variance with the undisturbed working of Christian truth, and with the perfect liberty of all men to serve God, without let or discouragement, in righteousness and holiness.

This is an extraordinary philosophical position for a Christian minister to promote, for it effectively encourages disobedience of temporal law and government. But Quaife was not content with merely rendering government and statesmen superfluous. He goes further and insists that the ultimate temporal kingdom is the Catholic Church.

Quaife asserts that the Vatican is anti-Christian, and from here the Pope himself is deemed to be an anti-Christian emperor. With a little word-play and truncation,

4 Barzillai Quaife, *Lectures on Prophecy and the Kingdom of Christ: Delivered in the Scots Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, from April 16 to June 18, 1848* (printed for the author, Sydney, 1848), text at https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/Lectures_on_Prophecy_and_the_Kingdom_of/ukJVAAAACAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

the Pope is actually charged by Quaife as the Anti-Christ. These are fiery words indeed, and it is hard to imagine a more inflammatory rhetoric could be possible.

The Reverend Quaife had an exhaustive command of the bible, and he mines both the Old Testament and the Gospel for proof of his conviction. He was especially fascinated by abstract numerological connections in the prophecies, and whole sections of his book are uncomfortably reminiscent of contemporary internet conspiracy theories and millenarian paranoia. When reading Reverend Quaife's extraordinary book, I was reminded of King Solomon's maxim that "What has been will be again, and what has been done will be done again; for verily there is nothing new under the sun".

Folks, I am running over my allocated time for this presentation. I had intended to talk about the eventual evolution of the relatively peaceful and inclusive society that we enjoy in Australia today; but that is a whole topic unto itself.

The social environment began to change dramatically when transportation ceased and the Victorian gold rushes of the early 1850s lured Irish miners from California to the Australian fields. Emboldened Irishmen from North America gave confidence to their downtrodden Australian counterparts, and events such as the Eureka Stockade were the result. From a more durable political perspective, the Irish made wealthy by gold and associated economic growth soon attained political representation. The parliamentary career of Charles Gavan Duffy, formerly an Irish radical and student of Daniel O'Connell, is one such example.

I would like to leave you with one final thought, that both Catholic and Protestant religious observance in colonial Australia was radical and unconventional. The Catholic mission to the convicts was extraordinarily intense, for it effectively offered salvation to those persons discarded by conventional society. And the Protestant effort to assert moral control in a radically disordered society was based upon a wholesale rejection of institutional power at all levels.

I do hope that some of this has stimulated your curiosity, and would like to welcome members of the Catholic Historical Society to visit the new rare book collection at the Australian Catholic University campus in North Sydney. We now have a specially built room for the collection in the library, and this is organised for easy use by visitors and researchers.

In concluding this lecture, I would like to share a little of my experience in assembling it. While I have had long-term experience with old books, I make no claim whatsoever to possessing any real knowledge of Australian or Irish ecclesiastic history. About two or three years into building the collection I laboured

under the misunderstanding that I had acquired some handle on the subject; but now after some five years have passed, I must concede that I really understand very little. This may actually be a fruitful place to work from, as the Socratic paradigm reduces all knowledge to nothing anyhow.

The point I am trying to make is that I actually need your input to make this collection progressively better and better. This is why I want you to come and use the collection and talk to me about the research you have unfolded over years - and even decades - of effort. In an age of digitisation when libraries and institutions are downsizing and discarding books, it is important that concerted and intelligent efforts are made to preserve rare printed material. You can all be a part of this initiative, and for this reason I will be honoured to welcome you as a guest to our collection.

THE APPOINTMENT OF CHARLES HENRY DAVIS AS COADJUTOR TO ARCHBISHOP JOHN BEDE POLDING – 1848–1854

Graeme Pender*

In a previous article,¹ I discussed the Benedictine formation of Charles Henry Davis at Downside Abbey, Bath and his ordination to the priesthood. I examined his aspirations for leadership, as well as the various positions he held simultaneously at Downside. Here, I am seeking to explore the process that led to his appointment as Archbishop John Bede Polding's Coadjutor in Sydney; including Bishop to the Diocese of Maitland, New South Wales and his voyage to Australia.

Bishop of Maitland and Coadjutor to John Bede Polding

Polding was appointed to the colony of New South Wales in 1834 as the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Sydney. In February 1842 he presented a list of prospective candidates to the Propaganda Fide Cardinals with the view to obtaining either an assistant or Coadjutor. Polding wanted episcopal help, so he could pursue lengthy missionary journeys to various Catholics in remote districts in outback Australia. Moreover, if a Coadjutor was appointed, he had the right of succession in the event of Polding's death. The original list consisted of two English Benedictines, William Ullathorne and Francis Appleton; an English secular priest, Robert Wilson; an Italian member of the Institute of Charity, Luigi Gentili and Polding's then current Vicar General, Francis Murphy.² Polding's proposals nearly always asked for an English Benedictine to be his Coadjutor. Australian Church historian, Christopher Dowd argues that Polding favoured candidates from the English Benedictine Congregation [EBC] in order to 'foster good relations with the British civil authorities both at home and in Australia.' Moreover, a Benedictine Coadjutor would 'strengthen the monastic establishment in Sydney'. With the right to succession after Polding's death, '[a Benedictine Coadjutor] would guarantee Benedictine leadership in the

1 Graham Pender, 'The Benedictine formation and ordination of Charles Henry Davis: coadjutor bishop of Sydney 1848–54', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol 42, 2021, 38–50.

2 Christopher Dowd, *Rome in Australia: The Papacy and Conflict in the Australian Catholic Missions 1834–1884* (Leiden Boston, 2008), 394.

* Graeme Pender is a permanent deacon in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and has a degree in music education from Melbourne University. He focused on Bishop Charles Henry Davis, OSB, for his doctor of theology dissertation, due to Davis' love of music, education and social justice.

Archdiocese'.³ Polding originally asked Ullathorne, but he declined:

I saw that if I should be appointed, being at so vast a distance from Rome, I should scarcely be free to exercise a judgement as to accepting or declining; that I should be driven to a kind of necessity to accept or to let the country go on for years more without having a bishop. I therefore told Dr. Polding that unless he consented to take my name off, and to promise he would not bring it before the Holy See, I should be compelled also to go to Europe until the affair was settled, because I should not otherwise be left a free agent in case my name were accepted.⁴

Following the directions of Polding, Ullathorne wrote to the Provincial of the EBC in 1838 requesting more Benedictines for the Australian Mission. The Provincial replied: 'the brethren in general and the chaptermen in particular are against sending our useful subjects abroad'.⁵ Ullathorne responded by doubting whether Polding's idea to staff the diocese with Benedictines would work. He suggested the Colony would almost certainly become an Irish mission due to the large numbers of Irish Catholics. Ullathorne wrote 'to do anything Benedictine in the Colony is now out of the question'.⁶ Ullathorne did not want to become involved in Polding's Australian Benedictine vision because he sensed it was destined to fail. Ullathorne returned to England and was subsequently appointed to a bishopric in the Diocese of Birmingham.

Polding later wrote to Cardinal Fransoni requesting his Vicar General, Henry Gregory be considered as his Coadjutor. This submission was rejected.⁷ Polding wrote to Fransoni asking the Sacred Congregation to consider increasing the number of bishops, so they could provide better for the spiritual needs of the community in the various missionary regions of Australia. He urged the Sacred Congregation to appoint a Coadjutor 'so that the infant Church on the death of the Pastor [Polding] might not incur grave loss'. He maintained:

Strengthened by such a helper, I would be able to visit distant places, areas

3 Dowd, *Rome in Australia*, 394.

4 Ullathorne, *From Cabin-Boy to Archbishop: the autobiography of Archbishop Ullathorne*, (Burns Oates, 1941), 164. See also Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia II*, (London: Herbert & Daniel, 1911), 485. Ullathorne was eventually consecrated Bishop by Bishop John Briggs, Vicar-Apostolic of the Yorkshire District on 21/6/1846. See Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia II*, 121.

5 Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia I*, (London: Herbert & Daniel, 1911), 370; see also Mary Shanahan, 'Bishop Davis: 1848–1854', *Manna*, no. 6, (1963), 52.

6 Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, Vol. I, 370; see also Shanahan, 'Bishop Davis', 52.

7 Dowd, *Rome in Australia*, 394.

where there are many faithful and where no Pastors visit. Besides, according to Church discipline it is right to establish individual Missions under the hand and eye of the Archbishop. Such is now almost impossible however, for it is not convenient that the head Ecclesiastic, on account of our relations with the civil Government, should be far distant from the city of Sydney.⁸

Polding wrote to Fransoni stating:

[T]he Anglicans are making every attempt to gain possession for themselves of this vast province...and it is important that an energetic opposition to their plans is put forward.⁹

Polding continued appealing that another Episcopal See should be established in Maitland, a short distance from the proposed Church of England Bishopric. He asked that a 'new Bishop be appointed Coadjutor to the Petitioner [Polding]'.¹⁰ He suggested Edmund Burchall, the current Prior of St. Edmunds at Douay as the possible Bishop of Maitland.¹¹ A Papal Brief created the Diocese of Maitland on 27 May 1847 and decided whoever was appointed to the position of Bishop of Maitland was to become Polding's Coadjutor.¹²

Burchall declined the offer due to the 'recent loss sustained by the Order among its most outstanding Fathers'.¹³ Luke Barber, the President General of the EBC wrote a letter to Cardinal Wiseman requesting that the Holy See not appoint Burchall due to the demise of some of monks from the EBC:

...unexpected and deplorable losses have since befallen the English Benedictine Congregation. No less than three of our most eminent Missionaries, including the Rev^d Dr. Appleton, have fallen victims to their charity and zeal in attending the sick. Thus and more especially by the death of Dr. Appleton, the means of supplying

8 Polding to Fransoni, 29/1/1846.

9 Polding to Fransoni, 16/4/1847.

10 Polding to Fransoni, 16/4/1847. Propaganda Fide ruled whoever became the Bishop of Maitland was to become Polding's Coadjutor too. Refer to Dowd, *Rome in Australia*, 394–395.

11 Polding to Fransoni, 16/4/1847; see Birt, *Obit book of the English Benedictines, 1600–1912*, (Edinburgh: J. C. Thomson at the Mercat Press, 1913), 178. Goold was earlier recommended to New Zealand, but after asking for Burchall to go to Maitland, Goold was recommended to the Diocese of Melbourne instead. Refer to Polding to Fransoni, 22/2/1847, paragraph 4 of Polding's attachment of recommended candidates.

12 Alan Brown, 'Charles Henry Davis, OSB, 1815–1854: Sydney's First Coadjutor Bishop', *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol. LIX April 1982, No. 2, 213; see Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia II*, 131; see Polding to Society for the Propagation of the Faith [France], 16/5/1847.

13 Barnabo to Pius IX, 5/9/1847, cited in Harold Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland 1866–1966*, (Maitland, 1966), 189–190. Several members of the EBC had died from a widespread illness while ministering to patients in hospitals.

the place of Father Prior Burchall are greatly diminished, not to say totally taken away.¹⁴

Likewise, Burchall did not want to place any more unnecessary strain on the already diminished numbers in the community by his departure to Australia. He recommended instead two candidates for the position of Bishop of Maitland. The first candidate was Davis who:

...has been under the guidance of Monsignor Polding who gives him a very honourable testimonial; and whilst he has praiseworthily held different positions for 13 years in the Convent of St Gregory in England, he has kept longing for the Australian Mission.¹⁵

The other candidate was Joseph Benedict Tidmarsh. Tidmarsh was at Downside with Davis and had been ordained priest on 19 September 1846.¹⁶ Barber endorsed Tidmarsh as Polding's Coadjutor and made no reference to Davis at all:

...I can offer, as I now do, with all deference and with the entire concurrence of the most Reverend the Archbishop, Father Joseph Benedict Tidmarsh, who, not occupying at present an office of essential importance, can be spared to the Congregation more readily than the Prior of St. Edmunds Monastery. Father Joseph Benedict Tidmarsh possesses learning, piety and zeal resting in humility, which in my humble judgement qualify him for any Ecclesiastical dignity which the Holy See may deign to confer on him. In his Monastery he is a pattern to his Brethren in the observance of regular discipline and of every religious virtue.¹⁷

Barber insisted that Tidmarsh's recommendation had 'the entire concurrence of the most Reverend Archbishop [Polding]'. In reality Polding argued against Tidmarsh's endorsement as his Coadjutor because of his inexperience, his youth and lack of desire to 'embrace the Australian Mission'.¹⁸ Instead Polding petitioned Fr. Thomas Grant, Rector of the English College and agent for English Bishops:

The Very Rev. Fr. President has suggested the name of Rev. Fr. Tidmarsh, a priest of St. Gregory's Monastery, Downside, whose praises all sing. He is a very young man, being only 29 years old, and he has not had any practical experience.

14 Barber to Wiseman, *Allanson Records IV*, Record CCCXXIV, 436, 626; see *Allanson History*, Vol. III, Pt 2.

15 Barnabo to Pius IX, 5/9/1847, cited in Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland 1866-1966*, 189-190.

16 Birt, *Obit book of the English Benedictines*, 197. Tidmarsh later succeeded Davis in the role as Cellarer in December 1847.

17 Barber to Wiseman, *Allanson Records IV*, Record CCCXXIV, 436, 627.

18 Barnabo to Pius IX, 5/9/1847, cited in Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland 1866-1966*, 189-190.

He has not shown any strong desire for inclination for the Australian missions. These three facts constitute the principal difficulty.¹⁹

Polding proposed Davis as his desired Coadjutor:

I would like to nominate the Rev. Fr. Charles Davis, a priest of the same monastery who is 33 years old. He has been involved as Superior for more than eight years in various charges in the course of which he has given proof of great prudence and zeal. Moved by charity he has acted as a Missionary for some years among the poor in the neighbourhood of the Monastery. The time of his profession is around that of Father Gregory. For 14 years he has had a strong and constant desire to be associated with me in the labours of the Mission, he has even written and proposed this and in the past week he warmly begged me to obtain from his Superiors the permission allowing him to accompany me. This permission would not be granted, I fear, if he were to remain a simple priest, but if he can be raised to the episcopate, there would not, it seems to me, be any such difficulty. I am sure at least that he would not be the cause of any further delay in this matter...I would prefer to have Father Davis who will also be more acceptable to Father Gregory and to the Clergy.²⁰

After returning from Ireland, Polding was interviewed by Barber and was advised it would not be possible to let Davis travel to Sydney as his Coadjutor due to the many significant positions Davis held at Downside. Polding wrote to Fransoni:

I have had an interview with the Rev. President of the Benedictine Congregation and I have learnt from him that, without encountering a strong opposition, it will not be possible to remove the Reverend Father Charles Davis from St. Gregory's Monastery where he is engaged in many undertakings of very great importance. When I had the honour of writing recently to Your Eminence I did not anticipate any such thing. As matters stand, I shall not insist that the proposed appointment be made on the grounds that it would be embarrassing to a Congregation which has no other object for its existence except to promote the good of Religion.²¹

Polding suggested:

[That Barber] be invited by the Holy See to propose some others of his subjects instead of the Most Rev. Father Burchell (sic), should his reasons for renouncing the episcopacy be admitted, and Father Davis be not nominated, and I ask the necessary permission be given me to substitute the name of the person chosen by the Most Rev. Father President on the address of the Apostolic letter to the Bishop-Elect of Maitland which has come into my possession and has been presented to the Most Rev. Father Burchall.²²

19 Polding to Grant, 11/8/1847.

20 Polding to Grant, 11/8/1847.

21 Polding to Fransoni, 1/9/1847.

22 Polding to Fransoni, 1/9/1847.

After prolonged negotiations, Davis was eventually chosen as Polding's Coadjutor. A Papal Brief appointed Davis to the Diocese of Maitland on 24 September 1847.²³ Following an audience with Pius IX, the Secretary of Propaganda Fide wrote:

Having heard the report, His Holiness, in place of Fr. Burchall, willingly substituted Fr. Charles Davis for the Maitland Episcopal See in Australia, and ordered the usual decree to be dispatched.²⁴

Ignoring this appointment by the Holy See, Thomas Grant from Rome wrote to Barber on the apparent advice of Franson stating that Burchall should once again be approached since Davis 'cannot be spared':

As Fr. C. Henry Davis cannot be spared for appointment to the Bishopric of Maitland and Coadjutor of Archbishop Polding, and as Propaganda thinks Fr. Tidmarsh too young under the circumstances, the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Franson, wishes that Prior Burchall again be pressed to accept the post. Failing this, he should see Archbishop Polding and agree with him on a fitting subject [to be sent], and write at once. Evidently Propaganda would like Burchall to accept the post.²⁵

The following day Franson suggested via correspondence to Polding that if he preferred Burchall to Davis, it would be more sensible for him to request Burchall again to be his Coadjutor bishop:

[I]t is best to decide nothing in this matter if it is still thought advantageous to ask the said Father Burchell to assume the burden. As the proposals would fall on the Benedictine monks and indeed the Order would have to make some sacrifices in every case, it would be desirable for such an important office that the one might really be promoted who, in every circumstance, gives us to expect the best result, all the more so because this choice was already settled [indecipherable word] by the dispatching of the Apostolic Briefs.²⁶

The subsequent comment by Barber illustrated the position of the EBC regarding Davis' appointment: '[The EBC is] against...others arguing against the appointment of Mr. C. Davis to Maitland, NSW'.²⁷

23 Brown, 'Charles Henry Davis, O.S.B. 1815–1854', see also *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1788–1850, 292.

24 Barnabo to Pius IX, 5/9/1847, cited in Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland 1866–1966*, 189–190.

25 Grant to Barber, 29/9/1847. My thanks go to Br. Terry Kavenagh for kindly supplying this document.

26 Franson to Polding, 30/9/1847.

27 Barber to Prest, 21/12/1847. My thanks go to Br. Terry Kavenagh for kindly supplying this document.

Whilst Burchall was the preferred candidate, the EBC and the Pope supported Davis' appointment.²⁸ It was around this time Davis relinquished his roles at Downside except his appointment as Parish Priest at St. Benedict's. Propaganda Fide, nonetheless, was still reluctant to appoint Davis to the position. Remarkably, letters from Frasoni and Grant were still urging Davis' appointment to be reconsidered. Davis was ordained bishop on 25 February 1848, but Polding was still corresponding to Frasoni in March 1848 about who was going to be appointed Bishop of Maitland. Polding wrote:

Concerning the Episcopate of Maitland let me say only this if there is still difficulty: it will be best to select from our people here one who already would have experience of the place and the people – and who also would benefit our people in his wearing of the mitre.²⁹

A few days later, Polding again wrote to Frasoni expressing his apparent frustration in the appointment process:

Of the Bishopric of Maitland, I shall only say that, if there is still a difficulty, it will be best to select from our men living here one who has experience of the place and the people and who is well-known also to me.³⁰

Following Davis's appointment to the role of Coadjutor and Bishop to Maitland, he was now able to 'bring consolation to the aged Prelate' and assist Polding in the promotion of Catholicism in Australia.³¹ Moran's description of Polding as an 'aged Prelate' is odd given Polding was only fifty-three years old. It is also surprising that during Davis' episcopacy in Australia, Davis never once visited Maitland. His spasmodic health and heavy workload kept him fully occupied in Sydney.³²

Davis took his role as Polding's Coadjutor very seriously, managing the Sydney Archdiocese for an aggregate of nearly three years during Polding's frequent missionary journeys into country New South Wales. This included his daily administrative responsibilities of the Archdiocese; rehearsal of the choir at St. Mary's; organ playing at the Cathedral; chaplaincy to the Benedictine nuns at Subiaco; his role on the Senate of Sydney University; his daily supervision and management of St. Mary's Seminary and Lyndhurst College; his examination of students and postulants; his role as Prior of St. Mary's monastery during the many

28 Barnabo to Pius IX, 5/9/1847, cited in Campbell, *The Diocese of Maitland 1866–1966*, 189–190.

29 Polding to Frasoni, 5/3/1848.

30 Polding to Frasoni, 8/3/1848.

31 Patrick Francis Moran, *The History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources* (The Oceanic Publishing Company, Sydney, 1896), 335.

32 Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia* II, 131.

absences of Polding and Gregory; as well as his spiritual and pastoral duties in the Archdiocese of Sydney.

Davis' Episcopal Ordination

Davis was consecrated Bishop of Maitland, New South Wales and Coadjutor to Polding at Bath on 25 February 1848.³³ Ullathorne, the Vicar Apostolic of the Midlands District and previous Vicar-General of New Holland, was the principal celebrant who consecrated Davis. The assistant prelates were Rev. Dr. Wareing of the Eastern District and Rev. Dr. Brown of the Welsh District.³⁴ Rev. Dr. Morris, the Senior-assistant bishop in the London District preached on the following Scripture to symbolise Davis' imminent missionary journey to Australia:

You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the Uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).³⁵

Davis received a gold Chalice and Paten from his friend Charles Michael Berington dated 5 February 1848. Davis took them with him to Sydney, and they are housed at the Heritage Centre of the Benedictine Sisters at Jamberoo Abbey.³⁶ They are used on special Eucharistic occasions in the convent chapel. The Chalice is inscribed in Latin, thus:

*R R D F Carolo Henricus Davis +
Apo Maitlandensi et Archdioeoesis Sydneiensis
Coadiutori + Caeloc Michael Berington – hoc grati ammi
Testimonium obtulit die V Mens Feb Mdccclviii Aiabos Culielmi et
Maria Josephine + Patris et Sororis huiusse maneris auctoris +
Propitietior Deus + Amen.*

After his ordination, Davis celebrated many liturgical functions as bishop including

33 Birt, *Obit book of the English Benedictines*, 150; see also Brown, 'Charles Henry Davis, O.S.B. 1815–1854', 213; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1788–1850, 292; *Allanson History*, Vol. III, Pt 2.

34 Brown, 'Charles Henry Davis, O.S.B. 1815–1854', 213.

35 Moran, *The History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources*, 335.

36 Davis' friend, Charles Michael Berington, was a descendant of the Berington family who were strong Catholic recusants and owned the Benedictine priory and manor of Little Malvern. Following Catholic emancipation, they donated land to build a larger church, in addition to the conventual church that was already there. Eventually, St. Wulstan's at Little Malvern was built (1862). Monks from the EBC have served as chaplains in the area from 1760. Eventually, the manor at Little Malvern was bequeathed to William Berington of Hereford. Following his death in 1847, it was passed to his son Charles Michael Berington, who lived there until his death in 1897.

the ordination of his younger brother, Edwin Davis in the Downside Chapel on 18 March 1848.³⁷ Davis concelebrated at the consecration of the Cathedral of St. George's in the Fields; one of the most spectacular consecrations of a Catholic Cathedral since the English Reformation. Also present were the Archbishop of Treves, seven English Bishops, and one Bishop from Ireland, one Bishop from Scotland, and three Bishops from Belgium and 240 priests.

Davis represented the Australian Church.³⁸

Davis left England for Australia on 15 August 1848, 'a few hours after having the happiness of celebrating Mass' on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 'under whose especial protection [he] placed [himself] on embarking'.³⁹

Raising funds to travel to Australia

In a letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, Davis requested monetary assistance for 'pontifical vestments, as well as food, clothes and money for the journey'. Davis did not want to arrive in Australia in debt.⁴⁰ After his ordination and appointment to Sydney, Davis had no resources other than 'the generosity of [his] friends and the charity of the faithful, to acquire the effects that [he] absolutely [needed]'.⁴¹ Davis added: 'the British Government, from which I had reason to hope for some aid, will not grant me anything'.⁴²

He wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, again requesting some kind of financial assistance, maintaining he was 'anxious to go and join the flock entrusted to [him], and from which [he is] only separated because of [his] poverty'.⁴³ Davis' lack of funds kept him at Downside for a number of months unable to travel. Another letter highlights the ongoing problems he was experiencing raising money for the voyage. Davis even requested that if a party of Catholic emigrants were travelling to Australia he would appreciate being considered by the Government to be their clergyman. One imagines Davis was hoping he might be given a gratuitous voyage with perhaps a stipend:

37 *Fasti Gregoriani* (Brief Notices), 'Oswald (alias Edwin) Davis', 102.

38 Moran, *The History of the Catholic Church in Australasia from Authentic Sources*, 335.

39 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

40 Davis to The Society for the Propagation of the Faith – Lyon, 1/3/1848, cited in M. Xavier Compton, *Adjutor Deus, Documents and Resource Material: relating to the Episcopacy of Archbishop John Bede Polding*, OSB 1, ed., M. Peter Damian McKinlay, Doreen Dyson, (Glebe Point, NSW: Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 2000), 172.

41 Davis to The Society for the Propagation of the Faith – Lyon, 1/3/1848, cited in *Adjutor Deus*, 172.

42 Davis to The Society for the Propagation of the Faith – Lyon, 1/3/1848, cited in *Adjutor Deus*, 172.

43 Davis to M. Choiselat-Gallien, 6/4/1848, cited in *Adjutor Deus*, 174.

The great difficulty which I have experienced to collect from private friends means sufficient to enable me to provide my outfit and passage to Sydney, urges me to again apply to Her Majesty's Colonial Government for assistance towards this object. Having been appointed some months since Coadjutor Bishop to Archbishop Polding I am anxious to engage without delay in the important duties of my position and therefore I shall feel most thankful for any assistance that Her Majesty's Government may think proper to endow me. Should there be a party of Emigrants consisting in great measure or in part of Roman Catholics, and should it be considered desirable by Her Majesty's Government that they should have on board a clergyman of their own faith, I shall be happy to embark in such a vessel, provided accommodation suitable to my state as a Clergyman be afforded me.⁴⁴

Davis finally persuaded the Colonial Office of London to help him. They indicated that if he could find a ship with female emigrants, presumably from Ireland, then the Government would help him.⁴⁵ Davis was to leave England on 15 August 1848.

A month or so after the arrival of Davis in Sydney, Polding mentioned the sum of £150 'destined for the payment of the Outfit and Passage of the Reverend Mr Burchall' and requested it be reallocated to Davis 'to supply the Sum that has been required for his Outfit and Passage'.⁴⁶ In another letter, Polding asked for 'the final settlement of the sum voted for outfit & passage of six – including the Bp of Maitland' to be made. Polding's humour becomes apparent: 'I calculate that I am rising in your estimation as a correspondent & man of business'.⁴⁷

As a 'man of business' it seems Polding took his time to organise the financial side of Davis' voyage. It is also unusual to think Polding advised Heptonstall to provide the money for Davis' trip five weeks after Davis arrived in Sydney. As it turned out, Davis arranged his finances with the assistance of Her Majesty's Colonial Office and perhaps from his friend Charles Berington. A number of key questions emerge in relation to the raising of funds by Davis. Polding gives the impression he was responsible for supplying Davis' financial assistance. This funding was not straightaway forthcoming. By March 1848, due to the 'tyranny of distance', Polding was still unaware who his Coadjutor was going to be. Even if Polding became aware of Davis' appointment by June or July 1848, it is reasonable to presume he would have at least started the process of funding or reimbursing

⁴⁴ Davis to The Colonial Office, London, 10/7/1848.

⁴⁵ A footnote from the following letter: Davis to The Colonial Office, London, 10/1/1848.

⁴⁶ Polding to Heptonstall, 18/1/1849; Polding to Franson, 5/3/1848.

⁴⁷ Polding to Heptonstall, 31/1/1849; Polding to Franson, 5/3/1848.

contributors for the voyage of his Coadjutor-elect. This did not occur. This perhaps points to Polding's failings as an administrator. One wonders if the Colonial Office in London or Davis' 'friends' were ever reimbursed by Heptonstall.

Why were the EBC not forthcoming in assisting Davis? He was travelling to one of their Missions to assist Polding. None of Davis' correspondence mentions any help from Downside, yet they eventually supported his appointment. Perhaps the responsibility of funding fell directly on Polding and the EBC were more or less observing protocol? If this was the case, one would think they could have helped Davis and requested Polding to refund them the cost. In Polding's later years he blamed the EBC for their failure to support his vision for the Australian Catholic Church. In a letter to Heptonstall in 1869, he wrote there had been a 'coldness and unwillingness to assist this infant [Australian Benedictine] Institute which disheartens me'.⁴⁸

The Voyage

Davis sailed from Downs, England on the *St. George*, a 605 ton ship carrying 45 passengers commanded by Captain Jones on 20 August 1848.⁴⁹ Jones was described by Davis as 'a first rate sea man' who had been 'engaged on this line' for 'the last 20 years'.⁵⁰ Accompanying Davis was Sheridan Moore from Downside, described by Davis as one who looked 'exceedingly delicate' and 'not likely to be more useful [in Sydney] than he promised to be in the English climate'.⁵¹

The voyage to Sydney took about four-months and 'on the whole [was] most favourable'.⁵² Davis was affected with homesickness because 'after each day' his 'mind reverted to [his] dear home – again and again' and he hoped and prayed for 'each dear individual' that 'all might be well'.⁵³

The *St. George* was unable to leave the channel for the first two weeks of the voyage because it 'was tossed to and fro by the foul winds and heavy squalls',

48 Polding to Heptonstall 26/2/1869. See also Polding to Gregory, 6/10/1871, quoted in Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*, 366, and Terence Kavenagh, 'Vaughan and the Monks of Sydney', *Tjurunga* 25, (1983), 170. Also refer to Christopher Dowd, *Papal policy towards conflict in the Australian Catholic Missions: The relationship between John Bede Polding, O.S.B., Archbishop of Sydney, and the Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide, 1842–1874*, (PhD diss., Australian National University, Canberra, July 1994), 358.

49 *Maitland Mercury*, 13/12/1848, 2.

50 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

51 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

52 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

53 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

affecting most on board with sea sickness, including Davis.⁵⁴ During the journey, Davis 'was attacked by a severe pain in [his] face which continued 6 or 7 weeks... during the whole of [the] hot weather, [but] left [him] as [they] got into the cold latitudes'.⁵⁵ His face became so inflamed he was unable to eat for 'some weeks'. The heat was so unbearable Davis 'was confined to [his] cabin applying hot fomentations, mustard plaisters and blisters to [his] poor face', whilst 'all on board were having shower baths and adopting very forcible modes of cooling themselves'.⁵⁶ Given his sea sickness and blistered face, Davis wrote he 'enjoyed every good health' and considered himself 'stouter than when [he] left England'.⁵⁷

Davis got up between five and six o'clock each morning and meditated and took 'a little walk' on the ship before breakfast. When he was in good health, Davis and Moore prayed 'a part of the Rosary...and various other prayers, after which [they] had [a] spiritual lecture'.⁵⁸ After breakfast, Davis studied until twelve o'clock and walked for another fifteen minutes and 'again took [his] studies, performed some spiritual exercises which [he] prescribed for [himself] before embarking and [saying] vespers and compline...till 3 o'clock when [he] took another ¼ hours walk before dinner'.⁵⁹

After dinner Davis spent time with the passengers for about thirty minutes then returned to his cabin and prayed Matins and Lauds. Moore would join Davis in his cabin to pray 'the penitential Ps. and Litanies, a few other prayers and spiritual lecture'.⁶⁰ For the remainder of the evening, he would remain in his cabin 'studying and discharging [his] spiritual duties'.⁶¹ Davis spent much of his time on board the *St. George* in prayer and study. Whilst he socialised, Davis found 'Tea at 6 and Grog at 9 o'clock...useless time destroyers'.⁶²

Davis disembarked from the *St. George* in Sydney Harbour at two o'clock on 8 December 1848⁶³ and 'within 20 minutes [he] reached St. Mary's...[and] was received most cordially by the deacon and charge of the Cathedral as well as by the

54 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

55 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

56 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

57 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

58 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

59 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

60 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

61 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

62 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

63 *Maitland Mercury*, 13/12/1848, 2; also see Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

Sub-Prior.⁶⁴

The following diary entry described Edmund Moore's first meeting with Davis at the doors of St. Mary's Monastery.⁶⁵ By all accounts the anticipation of Davis' arrival at St. Mary's was one of high drama. He wrote:

Shortly after dinner, about 2½, F Maurus was on the Bell Tower with the telescope looking to see if any ship was coming in; when he happened to look along one of the streets leading to St. Mary's, and whom should he see but two persons in black conducted by a third whom he recognised as the Medical Dr appointed by [the] Government to visit all ships coming into the Harbour. Immediately he ran down and spread the report that the new Bishop had arrived. I was as incredulous as St Thomas and to show my unbelief went straight to the gates which open into the enclosure from the street and maintained (?) till the opening of the gates and doors revealed Dr Davis in open sunshine within 8 yards of me. I was for retreating for I was ashamed of myself, unshaven for 3 or 4 days, and of my habit all tattered and torn. However, I saw it was too late to attempt to leave my ground, and accordingly stood firm for one minute longer. When on bended knee I'm kissing the ring and hand and receiving the Episcopal benediction of our long expected and truly beloved Right Revd Confre.⁶⁶

Finally, future articles will address the significance and contribution of Davis to the early Catholic Church in Sydney as he grew into his role as Polding's coadjutor. Unfortunately, a number of important aspects of Davis' capacity as a leader appear to have been overlooked by church historians, possibly because he lived in the shadow of Polding. Davis, however, was tremendously pragmatic in his duties, particularly when Polding was absent from St. Mary's on his missionary journeys. He was able to care for and 'calm the waters' in the monastery, particularly when Gregory left on extended periods of travel either alone or in the company of Polding.

Whilst Davis was the community's preferred Prior over Gregory, Davis could

64 Davis to Wilson, 9/12/1848.

65 Edmund Moore was born at Corby, Lincolnshire on 24/4/1824. His name was Henry Isaac Moore and he was educated at Downside from 1836–1843. He was clothed as a novice and took the name 'Edmund' in 1843. He was professed in 1845 and ordained in minor orders in 1846. Moore accompanied Polding to Australia in 1847 and arrived in Sydney in February 1848. He returned to Downside in 1849 and was ordained priest in September 1853. He died on 19/2/1899. Refer to Kavenagh, 'Profession Dates (and others) of the Monks of St. Mary's, Sydney', 75; and refer to Terence Kavenagh, 'My Dear Alphonsus...', *Tjurunga*, 1975/10, 43–44. Edmund Moore is not to be confused with Joseph Sheridan *Laurence* Moore who was born in Dublin on 27/2/1828 and professed on 17/5/1850 at St. Mary's, Sydney at the age of 22 years. Moore left St. Mary's after February 1856. Refer to Terence Kavenagh, 'Profession Dates (and others) of the Monks of St. Mary's, Sydney', *Tjurunga* 48, (May 1995), 69–75.

66 Moore to Morrall, 9/12/1848, quoted in Kavenagh, 'My dear Alphonsus...', 47.

not resolve the emerging instability at the monastery which had begun in the early 1850s. He loyally supported Polding during the growing discontent with Polding's desire to make Sydney an Abbey-diocese. Although Davis did not think this model of 'church' would endure in Sydney, he continued to loyally serve Polding as his coadjutor.

Davis was subject to bouts of bad health and suffered a fatal heart attack on 17 May 1854 serving as the most senior Catholic cleric in Australia. When he died the day before his fortieth birthday, Polding was in Rome offering his resignation as Archbishop of Sydney; a resignation that was not accepted.

‘AN ACT OF THE GREATEST FOLLY’: SAILING TO EUROPE FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Colin Fowler*

In January 1861 it became known in Sydney that Father Patrick Bermingham was about to leave the Colony accompanying ten boys from prosperous Irish Catholic families in his mission district in southern New South Wales to Ireland for their education.¹ Archbishop Polding was outraged, writing to Bermingham’s colleague at Yass, Father Michael McAlroy, describing the action as a ‘grievous scandal’, ‘a grief to the good, a triumph to the bad’.² Polding had only recently called on his clergy to support Lyndhurst College by encouraging Catholic parents to send their boys to Sydney.³ He had not received a reply from the Yass clergy. In alerting Bishop James Walshe of Kildare and Leighlin to Bermingham’s return, Polding referred to the sailing of the ten boys as ‘underhanded treachery’.⁴

Polding was supported in his outrage by the new editor of the *Freeman’s Journal* who published two forthright editorials.⁵ In the first he described Bermingham’s action as ‘an act of the greatest folly’. William Dolman had succeeded Jabez Heydon, who as editor had used the newspaper from 1857 to 1860 to attack Benedictine dominance in the Colony, especially focusing on Polding’s vicar-general, Henry Gregory. It was largely due to Heydon’s intervention that Gregory was recalled to England in 1860, much to Polding’s distress.⁶ Heydon would have

- 1 The boys were from the following families, as noted in the shipping clearance notice: O’Mara (2 brothers), Hilley, Downey, Garry, Fitzgerald, Murray, O’Sullivan, Sheahan (2 brothers) (*Empire*, 2 February 1861, 4). The *Omar Pasha* sailed on February 6; also on board were Abbot Gregory and Father Bermingham.
- 2 Polding to McAlroy, 16 January 1861 ((Compton, M. Xavier et al [eds], *The Letters of John Bede Polding OSB*, 3 vols, Sydney, 1994, III.1 [henceforth cited as PL]).
- 3 On the history of Lyndhurst College see Graeme Pender, ‘Early Catholic education in Sydney: Lyndhurst College’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, 97 (2020), 350–362.
- 4 Polding to Walsh, 19 February 1861 (PL III.14) James Walshe (1803–1888), ordained priest 1830; professor at Carlow College and president in 1850; consecrated bishop 1856.
- 5 *Freeman’s Journal*, 26 January & 2 February 1861.
- 6 Kevin Livingston described Gregory’s recall and Bermingham’s action as ‘two blows from which Polding never recovered’ (Kevin T. Livingston, *The Emergence of the Australian Catholic Priesthood 1835–1915*. Catholic Theological Faculty, Sydney).

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cheered Bermingham's initiative in undermining the Benedictine establishment at Lyndhurst College. However, Dolman, who took over in June 1860, brought a different attitude. Polding had triumphally informed Cardinal Barnabò of the change: 'I am happy to tell Your Eminence that the bad tool of a semi-Protestant proprietor and its editor who is an Apostate – I mean the Freeman's Journal – has passed into hands truly Catholic, and in the future we shall be able to look forward to seeing our affairs reported to the people in a suitable manner'⁷ Dolman had been the French master St. Mary's Seminary and an examiner at Lyndhurst, and he wrote vigorously in defence of Catholic education available in Sydney. There were three arguments in his editorials. The first was arguing the folly of sending boys away; the second was a defence of the quality of education available at Lyndhurst; the third concerned the question of cost, arguing in great detail that it was much cheaper to send sons to Lyndhurst than overseas. He supported his case for Lyndhurst with the written testimonies of Dr. Woolley, Professor of Classics and Logic at the University of Sydney, Professor Pell, Professor of Mathematics, the Rev. H. Hose, Warden of St. Paul's Anglican College; and the Very Rev. Dr. John Forrest, Rector of St. John's College.

Dolman conceded that 'twenty years ago, it was next to impossible to provide a liberal education for a young man within the colony; nay, fifteen or even ten years ago it was very difficult to do'. But he boasted that 'since the latter period a most striking change has taken place, and we unhesitatingly aver that at the present time education of the highest order can be obtained within the colony with as great facility, and at much less expense, than in any country in the world, not excepting even England itself.'

From the beginning of his call to the missionary episcopacy, Polding had focused on the education of clergy and youth in the Colony. Soon after his consecration in June 1834, he sent a Memorial to the Colonial Secretary seeking provision for 'the education of the children of the Respectable Catholic Settlers', by the purchase of 'Books and other Articles necessary to found a Scholastic Establishment for that Class.' He also negotiated for the inclusion of catechists in his missionary band⁸. During the voyage from Liverpool, he began the formation of these young men in preparation for eventual ordination. Soon after his arrival in Sydney in September 1835 he established a seminary in his own household at Woolloomooloo, as

1977, 49). Gregory and Bermingham sailed from Sydney on the same ship.

7 Polding to Barnabò, 21 July 1860 (PL II.325).

8 Polding to T. Spring Rice, 6 August 1834 (PL I.39).

explained by Fr. John Kenny: 'The nucleus of St. Mary's seminary was formed in the year 1836, when there were four students intended for the church pursuing their preparatory studies in the Bishop's house, viz. – Messrs Harding [aged 29], Kenny [20], Reynolds [19] and Gorman [a boy].'⁹ It was this establishment that was expanded in 1838 to include lay students, and relocated to a purpose-built facility next to the Cathedral. Vicar-General Ullathorne, in his pamphlet of 1837, 'The Catholic Mission in Australasia', wrote: 'The bishop devoted his immediate and most earnest care to the increase in the number of schools, and to their improvement, our chief hopes resting on the rising generation.'¹⁰ In Polding's report to Rome in 1841, having extolled his people as 'eager beyond measure to give a sound education to their children', he contrasted the state of Catholic education in the Colony at his arrival in 1835 with the situation in 1841: '1835: 10 schools; 1841: 31 schools and a seminary with six ecclesiastics, 20 students [boarders] and 20 extern students.'¹¹

The first despatch of students to Europe for education took place in June 1837: 'In the beginning of the year 1837, Mr. Reynolds, and a Mr. Ferguson went to Europe to prosecute their studies for the church there.'¹² This did not represent a change of Polding's policy of providing local education, but rather it was a matter of opportunism, taking advantage of the covering of costs by the families involved. Maurice Reynolds was the son of a prosperous supplier of hardware in Sydney, and the convert, Thomas Tierney Fergusson, the son of a ship's captain based in Calcutta.¹³ The key factor in the decision to send them both to Europe was their capacity to pay their own expenses, as hinted at by Polding in a letter to the Prior of Downside:

Two young men, one a Convert, I send to Douay for a few years. I could not here give them that strict trial and continued attention required to bring persons of their age to the humility and other virtues of the religious life ... I have selected Douay because they will be there more secluded from the world than at Downside or Ampleforth. They pay their own expenses, and by the time they have been duly instructed, professed and ordained, I

9 Kenny, *op.cit.*, 116.

10 W. Ullathorne, *The Catholic Mission in Australasia*, Liverpool, 1837, 14.

11 Henry Norbert Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers in Australia*. 2 vols, London 1911, II.29–30

12 Kenny, *op. cit.*

13 Fergusson referred to his parents, father deceased and mother living in England, in his wills written prior to his voyage from Sydney and prior to his crossing the English Channel for Douay (see Birt Files, 20 June 1837 (File J423) and 15 June 1838 [File K67]). Letters from the Birt collection in Downside Abbey Archives have been accessed via the National Library of Australia (Records of Downside Abbey (as filmed by the AJCP) microform 1819–1869).

trust we shall have subjects for the Novitiate, to whom they may impart the Benedictine Spirit, [which] it will be my fervent prayer they may deeply imbibe.¹⁴

Polding's intention that these young men, probably in their late-teens, would take the Benedictine habit and make profession of vows, was far from what Reynolds and Fergusson had in mind. They sailed from Sydney on 21 June 1837 and after their voyage on the ship *Medora*, which included a ship wreck off the coast of Brazil, they eventually arrived at Douay in mid-1838.¹⁵ In September, the Prior at Douay, James Francis Appleton, reported on the arrivals in a letter to his cousin, Paulinus Heptonstall, whom he playfully addressed as 'the Plenipotentiary of the Australian Mission in Europe'; in the same vein he called Polding 'the Doctor McHale of the Antipodes!' Regarding the new arrivals from the Antipodes, he was less light-hearted:

With regards to the studies of Messrs Reynolds and Ferguson, we have allowed the latter to commence his Philosophy, and the former we have required to go through a course of Rhetorick. I have not been very well pleased with the pretensions of either since my return to St. Edmund's. They both wished to begin their Philosophy and expected to complete their course in three or four months time, after which a year or two's Divinity at most would have qualified them for Orders and for going out to the Australian Mission. They had no notion of the tardy movement of a regular course of studies and of the probation by which their character, qualities, piety etc are to be vetted. They have a desire to be ordained, and that in their eyes appeared an all-sufficient qualification. Reynolds too had lived under Dr Polding's roof and dined at his table, and he thought himself entitled to be removed from the students' quarters and associate with the Community ... If they want to get on at this speed, they shall do it elsewhere; we shall certainly not break down this established discipline of the House to please them and cause untold trouble. Ferguson was put in the school of Poetry as soon as he came and made follow that course until the vacations commenced, but he called that doing nothing in one of his letters, because it did not quite accord with his notion of quick movement. I do not know what these two fellows will turn out.¹⁶

14 Polding to Brown, 14/6/1837 (PL I.84)

15 See 'Loss of the *Medora*' (*Sydney Monitor*, 27 December 1837, p 2).

16 Father Appleton (Douay) to Father Heptonstall 12 September 1838. (Birt File K100). James Francis Appleton (1807-1847). ordained 1830; Prior of St. Edmund's, Douay 1833-41. In 1842 he was on Polding's list of possible candidates for the bishopric of Adelaide or auxiliary for himself; in 1845 Propaganda considered him for Perth (see Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania 1825 to 1850*. ANU Press, Canberra 1979, 351, 374). The biographical details of the monks

There was no mention of any intention to take the monastic habit. Letters from Appleton in December detailed further developments:

I mentioned in the Postscript, I think, of my last letter that I was not at all pleased with Fergusson. I think I had not then consulted my Council about him, but I have since done so, and we are unanimous that we cannot, with safety to ourselves, retain him here any longer. His removal has, by a formal decree, been declared necessary. In order however that he may be removed in the least disagreeable way, and to avoid bringing him into unnecessary disgrace, we desire that you will write to him and call him over, and then, if you deem it advisable, you can give him another trial elsewhere. I feel bound however to inform you at the same time, for your guidance in your future dealings with him, that the Council is unanimous not only in requiring his removal, but in the firm conviction that this individual will be a Priest. We have nothing to object to his morals ... but we reproach him with a glaring want of piety and devotion, a totally unmortified carriage and exterior, neglect of the regular exercises of devotion, want of application to his studies, violation of rules, and what is worse, maintaining openly that he cannot be bound in conscience to observe any rules. We find that he is a complete worldling, and I have to apprehend complete subversion of the spirit of the Establishment, by his being allowed to remain longer in it. I beg, therefore, you will not delay to call him away.¹⁷

He was less negative regarding Reynolds:

His companion Reynolds is much better disposed, though very inferior in talent; he will therefore stand a much better chance of succeeding by being separated from Fergusson.

A few weeks later Appleton breathed a sigh of relief and cautiously reflected on Doctor Polding's judgment: 'I am very glad Fergusson is gone, and equally so to find that you have washed your hands of him. I think it a happy riddance for all parties. I wonder Dr Polding should not have been more clear sighted.'¹⁸

Ferguson is listed among the students of Douai in 1838, with the comment, 'Paid for by Archbishop Polding. Dismissed in December'.¹⁹ He eventually made his way to Propaganda College in Rome. In July 1839 he wrote to Heptonstall suggesting that Reynolds join him:

I wish that Mr Reynolds could be taken from Douay and sent either here or

of the English Benedictine Congregation, here and throughout, are taken from Henry Norbert Birt's *Obit Book of the English Benedictines, 1600–1912*, Edinburgh, 1913.)

17 Appleton to Heptonstall, 1 December 1838 (Birt File K133).

18 Appleton to Heptonstall, 22 December 1838 (Birt File K141).

19 Pupils of the Schools at Paris, Douai and Woolhampton
<http://www.s525015826.websitehome.co.uk/Pupils/slides/page-53.html>

to some other public College where he would have more advantages than at present ... Do not imagine I am irritated against Douay in urging Mr Reynold's removal thence. I only wish to see him properly educated, which at Douay is impossible. A week in Propaganda would convince you of the truth of what I say ... I shall stay in Rome until I am ordained priest, if it please God to advance me to that stage.²⁰ He was ordained for the Western District in England, whose Vicar-Apostolic was Thomas Brown, former prior of Downside.²¹ He achieved some prominence in England as secretary to the Catholic Institute.²²

Reynolds transferred to St. Sulpice at Paris in 1840, as indicated in a letter from his father to Heptonstall.²³ His father, William, died suddenly following an accident at his hardware store in April, 1841, as detailed in the *Sydney Monitor*.²⁴ Maurice then became dependent on the Archbishop for his funding, a situation much regretted by Polding, as he complained in September:

Reynolds wants more money than I can spare;²⁵

He wanted him to return to Australia:

I regret Reynolds did not go strait [sic] back, for it is very inconvenient to me to provide him with money.²⁶

He eventually arrived in Sydney in January 1843.²⁷ He seems to have become a beneficiary of his father's estate, enabling him to make a significant contribution to Polding's ambition to erect a peal of bells for the Cathedral:

The Great Bell his Grace announced to be the munificent donation of Mr. Maurice Reynolds.²⁸

Reynolds became a successful solicitor in Sydney and in 1859 was among the signatories of an controversial appeal to the Holy See:

20 Fergusson to Heptonstall, 18 July 1839 (Birt File K232).

21 Thomas Joseph Brown O.S.B. (1798–1880), Prior of Downside 1834–1840; Vicar-Apostolic of Western District 1840–1850; Bishop of Newport and Menevia, 1850–1880.

22 'The Rev. T. T. Fergusson, D.D., late secretary to the Catholic Institute', *The Tablet*, 12 February 1848.

23 William Reynolds to Father Heptonstall, 12 March 1841 (Birt File L14)

24 *Sydney Monitor and Commercial Advertiser*, 23 April 1841, 2.

25 Polding to Heptonstall, 29 September 1841 (PL I.187)

26 Polding to Heptonstall, 7 May 1842 (PL I.205).

27 'The barque *John Woodall*, Williams, master, from London 19th August, with merchandise. Passengers ... Mr. Reynolds intermediate' (*Australian*, 11 January 1843, 2).

28 *Australasian Chronicle*, 27 September 1843, 2.

CATHOLIC AFFAIRS. On Wednesday evening last there was posted for Europe, by the mail-steamer *Malta*, by Messrs. R. O'Connor, W. McEvilly, Randal Macdonnell, M. Reynolds, and J. K. Heydon, an appeal to the Holy See against the monition lately addressed to them by His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney, which compelled them, under pain of excommunication, to renounce the proceedings initiated at a meeting of Catholics in the Victoria Theatre, on the 26th of February last.²⁹

Polding followed with a response sent to Cardinal Barnabò seeking to discredit the signatories of the appeal:

The men who signed it are wage earners of mediocre stock and deranged. Concerning Reynolds he wrote:

A small-time advocate with little reputation or public standing ... such a man as never approaches the sacraments.³⁰

In May 1877, the death of Maurice Reynolds was reported in the *Freeman's Journal*:

PARRAMATTA. Fatal Accident. Mr. Maurice Reynolds, solicitor, was thrown from his horse, and lingered but a few hours, never having regained consciousness. The deceased gentleman was universally respected, and was possessed of high literary and musical attainments, and much sympathy is expressed for Miss Reynolds in the severe loss she has sustained by the sad and untimely end of her brother.³¹

Polding is not known to have again sent seminarians to Europe to complete their priestly formation. He was granted three places at Propaganda and two at a Benedictine Abbey in Switzerland, but he commissioned Heptonstall and the Archbishop of Dublin to seek appropriate candidates to occupy these vacancies.³² It is not known whether these places were filled.

The thought of sending students to Downside was first expressed in a letter from Ullathorne to Prior Brown in October 1839:

Had I come, I should have brought Mr Commissioner Therry's son to Downside; I fear we shall not soon find an opportunity to send him.³³

A year later, in November 1840, three sons of prominent and prosperous Sydney Catholic families sailed with Bishop Polding and Ullathorne for Europe.

DEPARTURES. NOVEMBER 16 ... For Valparaiso, via New Zealand, the brig *Orion*, Captain Saunders, with sundries. Passengers – Right Rev.

29 *Freeman's Journal*, 6 April 1859, 2.

30 Polding to Barnabò, 13 April, 1859 (PL II.278).

31 *Freeman's Journal*, 5 May 1877, 10.

32 Polding to Heptonstall, 2 November 1842 (PL I.221).

33 Ullathorne to Prior Brown, 18 October 1839 (Birt, *Benedictine Pioneers*, I.440)

Bishop Polding, Very Rev. Dr. Ullathorne, Rev. Mr. Gregory, Messrs. Chambers, Therry, Carter, junior.³⁴

The boys were William Carter, aged 17, son of Captain William Carter;³⁵ George Carrington Therry, aged 12, only son of Roger Therry, acting Attorney-General during 1840; David Douglas Chambers, aged 14, eldest son of solicitor Charles Henry Chambers.³⁶

Carter and Therry had been among the first lay boarders at St. Mary's Seminary, which opened in February 1838.³⁷ The opening was advertised in all Sydney newspapers throughout January:

SEMINARY OF ST. MARY, Adjoining St. Mary's Cathedral. THIS INSTITUTION will be opened "pro forma" on the 26th of this Month.

Studies will commence on the 1st of February. It will be conducted under the direction of The Right Rev. Bishop.

For Terms and Tickets of Admission, apply to THE REV. JOHN M'ENCROE, Administrator, or, THE REV. CHARLES LOVAT, President.

Only a limited number of Boarders will be received.³⁸

David Chambers joined Carter and Therry in 1839, but schooling at St. Mary's was not a happy experience for him, nor for the school, as recorded in letter in May from Polding to Fr Henry Gregory:

The seminary has encreased – but only by a little. Mr. Chambers' eldest boy was accepted into it and has been the cause of much injury. He pretended that Mr. Farley made use of very improper language to the Boys calling them Scoundrels and Convicts – which Farley utterly denies – that he was kicked unmercifully – the end was, he was removed, and since then have gone further equally ill founded tales.³⁹

Charles Chambers had chosen a variety of schools for his sons, Charles junior being enrolled during 1835 and 1836 at the Normal Institution, a school located in Elizabeth Street not far from the Chambers residence. It had been established in

34 *Australasian Chronicle*, 17 November 1840; Kenny, *op cit.* 206.

35 Captain Carter was prominent in Catholic circles, being on the committee established in August 1840 for the building of St. Patrick's church; in the following month, he was active in establishing in Sydney branches of the Catholic Institute and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (*Australasian Chronicle*, 4 June 1840, 3 and 27 August 1840, 2)

36 The ages of Carter and Therry are calculated from the ages given in death notices; the age of Chambers is from the 1828 NSW census.

37 Kenny, *op. cit.*, 119.

38 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 16 January 1838, page 1

39 Polding to Gregory, 17 May 1839 (PL I.136).

1835 by the enlightened educator and Presbyterian minister, Henry Carmichael, who had been brought from Scotland by Rev John Dunmore Lang to join the staff of his Australian College.⁴⁰

A few months before sailing east with Bishop Polding, Vicar-General Ullathorne published his 'Reply to Judge Burton', which he concluded by commenting on the state of education in Sydney:

There are at present in the Catholic seminary four students in divinity, twenty-one seminarists [boarders], and fourteen day attendants ... In addition to King's School, the Australian College and the Bishop's seminary, there is the Sydney College, an institution of great utility, in which persons of all religions are admitted upon terms of equality. Notwithstanding these, and the immense sums yearly voted for schools, the state of education in the colony is low to the last degree, in consequence of the opposition of Mr. Burton's party to every amelioration of the present system attempted by government.⁴¹

There is no indication that the inclusion of three boys on the voyage was a change of policy from the commitment of providing education in Sydney. In the absence of any explanation given by Polding, it is to be presumed that the initiative was with the boys' fathers.

In his autobiography, Ullathorne mentioned George Therry in his recollections about the voyage on the brig *Orion* across the Pacific from Sydney via New Zealand to Chile. He described an excursion in Bay of Islands by a group consisting of himself, Bishop Polding, Dr. Gregory, a son of Justice Therry, a boy of twelve years, and two of the missionary Fathers.⁴² In Chile, with amusement he recalled that Therry was mistaken for Polding's son by locals, who regarded the bishop, being English, as a Protestant.⁴³ The Chambers and Carter boys were not mentioned.

The intention had been that on reaching the Chilean port of Talcahuana, the voyagers would cross overland to Buenos Ayres to avoid the dangers of rounding Cape Horn, and take a ship to England. However, because of war raging in the interior, they braved the Cape on a French whaling vessel, which delivered them to Le Havre, from where they crossed the Channel to London, arriving in June 1841, eight months after leaving Sydney.

Polding placed Carter and Therry at Downside, and, perhaps wanting to spare his

⁴⁰ *Sydney Herald*, 25 December 1834, p 2.

⁴¹ *Australasian Chronicle*, 22 September 1840, 2

⁴² William Bernard Ullathorne, *The Devil is a Jackass: being the dying words of the autobiographer William Bernard Ullathorne 1806–1889* (edited by Leo Madigan), Downside Abbey Publications Bath, 1995, 219.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 224.

Alma Mater the unruly David Chambers, had him placed at Oscott, Birmingham, where Father Nicholas Wiseman had just taken over as President.⁴⁴ Carter's stay at Downside was brief, as Polding informed Heptonstall in September:

Messrs Coffey & McEvoy, with young Carter, sail for Sydney this day.⁴⁵

The young student accompanied by two new Irish priest recruits arrived in Sydney at the end of January 1842:

From Liverpool, yesterday, whence she sailed the 1st October, the barque Carthaginian [sic], Captain Robertson, with 243 Bounty Immigrants, under the superintendence of R. Nelson, Esq., M.D. Passengers, the Rev. Mr. Coffey, the Rev. Mr. McEvoy, Messrs. Carter ...⁴⁶

Carter's death was announced in 1860:

At Bhaugulpore [sic], East Indies, on the 31st May, 1860, of confluent small pox, William Carter, Esq., aged 38, only brother of Augustus Carter, Clerk of the Peace for the Northern District.⁴⁷

Captain Carter had died in 1852.⁴⁸

Awaiting Polding on arrival at Downside was a letter that Charles Chambers had written in January to Father Heptonstall, informing him of the plans for David:

11 January 1841

To Revd Thomas Heptonstall, care of W R Jones, bookseller, 63 Paternoster Row, London.

Dear Sir,

I address you as the agent of Doctor Polding, R.C. Bishop of the Colony, who, as you may be aware, is on his voyage to England.

In his care I entrusted my eldest son named David Douglas Chambers in order that he might be placed at some seminary in England, the choice of which I partly left to himself, tho' I named Stonyhurst and Downside.

Before this reach you, both I trust will have previously arrived and my boy will no doubt be placed at school – I committed some money with his Lordship the Bishop to defray the charges of my son's passage across South America and from Buenos Ayres (a route which they took) and something to cover any other costs in England on account of my son for some time.

44 Nicholas Wiseman (1802-1865): June 1840, ordained bishop & appointed Coadjutor Vicar Apostolic of Midland District, England; September 1850, appointed Archbishop of Westminster; 1850, appointed Cardinal-Priest of Santa Pudenziana.

45 Polding to Heptonstall, 29 September 1841 (PL I.187)

46 *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 29 January 1842, 2.

47 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 August 1860, 1

48 *Freeman's Journal*, 18 March 1852, 11. Bhagalpur is a city on the southern banks of the Ganges in the Indian state of Bihar.

If perchance His Lordship should not have arrived before this letter, please retain the funds for his arrival, but I anticipate their appearance before your receipt of this.

The next stage in David's saga was revealed in a cautious letter from Father Francis Daniel, Rector of the Jesuit College of Stonyhurst in Lancashire, to Father Heptonstall:

Sept. 22 1841

Revd Dear Sir

A few days ago I had the honor of receiving a letter from Rt. Revd. Dr Polding, in which he requested me to receive into our College a young gentleman, whom he had brought from Australia, and who he very kindly informed, was lately sent from Oscott. Having been informed of this circumstance, I felt obliged to make all the enquiries I could respecting his removal. My information from Oscott and a second letter from Dr Polding were satisfactory as to the principal point of my anxiety; and upon the strength of the reports from both parties, I am willing to admit him, hoping that by his submission to the rules and regulations of the college, and by his obedience to his Superiors, he will not give us any reason to repent of the confidence we have placed in the recommendation of Dr Polding.

I have sent you Revd. Dr. Sir, as the appointed Guardian of Master Chambers, a Prospectus of our regulations so that you may see what is required for his outfit.

Begging a favor that you will advise me of his arrival.⁴⁹

Charles, in receipt of letters from David, was obviously not happy with the way in which his son was being shunted around, and wrote summoning David back to Sydney, where he would have as good an education as in England under William Cape at the Sydney Academy.⁵⁰ He took the opportunity to criticise the administration of Stonyhurst, specifying that David had reported having been severely beaten for not eating his dinner. He expressed disappointment in Dr Polding, 'who knew that my respectability and station in life here entitled my son to every care and attention.'⁵¹

David arrived back in Sydney in January 1843, on the same ship as Maurice Reynolds: 'The barque *John Woodall*, Williams, master, from London 19th August, with merchandise. Passengers, cabin — Mr. D. Chambers ... Mr. Reynolds

49 Chambers to Heptonstall, 11 January 1841 (Birt File L2).

50 V. W. E. Goodin, 'Cape, William (1773–1847)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography*, Australian National University (accessed online 11 December 2021).

51 Chambers to Heptonstall, 16 May 1842 (Birt File L151).

intermediate.⁵² Also on board was the Abbé Vincent Bourgeois, teacher at Downside, whom Polding had recruited for St Mary's Seminary. This was a strong indication of his determination to have in Sydney an institution on the model of Downside, Stonyhurst and Oscott, namely institutions providing formation for clergy and education of lay students. The *Freeman's Journal* delighted in the arrival of Bourgeois.

On Sunday last a solemn High Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated in the Cathedral of this archdiocese, for the safe arrival of the Rev. Messrs. Bourgeois ... M. Bourgeois, who, has filled for some years and with great credit a professorship in Downside College, (a branch of the University of London) remains in Sydney and will, we understand, be professor of humanity in the archiepiscopal seminary, which, by the addition of two other professors from the best schools of Europe, and now on their voyage, will immediately be raised to the rank of a college of the first order. We are sure that this news will fill our readers and all the friends of education in the colony with delight. If the voyage of his grace the Archbishop had been attended with no other effect but this and the erection of Sydney into a see, we should console ourselves for a long and painful absence, which a few days and a fair breeze will we trust now speedily terminate.⁵³

Bourgeois was immediately appointed President of St Mary's. At the end of 1843 the *Morning Chronicle*; successor of the *Australasian Chronicle*, published an extensive report on the annual examinations at the seminary:

ST. MARY'S SEMINARY, SYDNEY. UNDER THIE IMMEDIATE PATRONAGE AND INSPECTION OF HIS GRACE THE MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP POLDING. The Examination of the Students of the above institution took place on the 20th and 21st inst., before the Most Rev. Dr. Polding, the Very Rev. Dr. Murphy, V. G., the Rev. Mr. Bourgeois, president, the Rev. Messrs. M'Encroe, Trippe, and M'Gennis, the Rev. Mr. Hallinan, and Mr. Clarke, masters, and a numerous assembly of the friends and relatives of the pupils. The examination of the classes in the various branches of a Classical and Commercial Education, evidenced the marked progress of all the students without exception in the development of those intellectual and highly moral qualities which have been so successfully inculcated and fostered under the careful and indefatigable superintendence of their instructors.

The Archbishop concluded by expressing his pride in the institution:

His Grace, at the conclusion, once more complimented the students in a

⁵² *Australian*, 11 January 1843, 2.

⁵³ *Australasian Chronicle*, January 1843, 2.

very gratifying address, and particularly alluded to the pleasing unanimity, which united them not only to their fellow students, but which engendered a friendly and affectionate confidence and reciprocity of feeling towards their instructors, without which no system of education could by possibility be commendable or successful in its application.⁵⁴

Polding looked to English Catholic institutions, not as destinations for Australian boys, but as models for Catholic education in Sydney.

While in Europe Polding also succeeded in recruiting some Christian Brothers, not for St. Mary's, but for the education of the poorer classes in primary schools. His thoughts turned also to the education of girls, enlisting Heptonstall to be on the lookout for Benedictine nuns willing to sail to Australia in order to provide 'the better, that is, the richer classes of Society, with the means of education'.⁵⁵ This project would be realised with the establishment of monastery and school at Subiaco on the Parramatta River in 1851.

In November 1841, Judge Roger Therry wrote to the Prior Peter Wilson of Downside in reply to a positive report he had received concerning his son George:

My Dear Sir,

I beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th of June, and am much gratified by the account you give me of George – he is naturally a child of a cheerful disposition, and with the kind attention I am confident he receives at Downside, will become a very contented and, I hope, good boy. I am anxious to learn how he got thru' the winter, for you are aware he has come from a country in which the snow never falls, and that the change from a climate mild as that of Naples to an English winter is a trying ordeal for a child of George's age to pass thru'. I am much obliged by your kind assurance to give Dr Polding, who about this time I presume is thinking of coming back to us, promised to take George with him to New Hall to see his sisters. I should be very glad to hear of his having fulfilled his intentions in this respect, as it is the only opportunity perhaps that may present itself for George to see his sisters until I visit, if (D[eo] V[olente]) I should visit England. If Dr Polding has not left for N S Wales pray remind him of this promise and pray of him on my account to fulfill it.

As to accomplishments there is time enough for them for George – but I think he might with advantage learn to dance; he evinced a talent for music and if he continues to do so, I would be glad to encourage it. Before he left he received a few lessons on the violin, and if he showed any disposition to do so, I wish he could resume that instrument. To wind instruments I retain a strong objection, and would on no account desire him to have any of them;

⁵⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 23 December 1843, 3.

⁵⁵ Polding to Heptonstall, 18 May, 1842 (PL I.207)

they are too severe a tax on young boys' health and strength.

Assure George of the affectionate love of his Mamma and myself, and tell him that his sister Sophia, whom he left here almost an infant, remembers him, and that we all often talk and think of him, and shall be delighted when he is so far advanced as to be able to write to us.⁵⁶

Therry had sent two daughters, Jane Frances and Ann Huskisson to the convent-school at New Hall.⁵⁷ Sophia, referred to in the letter, was later sent to St. Joseph's convent-school in Taunton.⁵⁸ Back in Sydney, Jane Francis (1831–1903) joined the Benedictine nuns at Subiaco, becoming Sister Scholastica; Sophia (1836–1923) joined the Taunton Franciscans becoming Sister Gertrude Joseph and later was elected abbess; Ann returned to Sydney and married in 1853:

By special license, on the 14th ult., at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, by the Right Rev. Dr. Davis: and at St. James's by the Rev. George Carwithen, Chaplain of H.M.S Calliope, Lieutenant JOHN WARD, of H.M.S. Calliope, son of John Rawdon Ward, Esq., Upton, Slough, Bucks, to ANN HUSKISSON, eldest daughter of Mr. Justice Therry, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of New South Wales.⁵⁹

George Canning Therry completed his education at Downside and joined the army, becoming a Captain and later Lieutenant-Colonel of the 105th Light Infantry, which had been part of the East India Company army until the Crown took control of the Presidency armies in the aftermath of the Indian Rebellion of 1857; it embarked for England in 1874. His death was reported in Australian newspapers in September 1884.

In 1856 Judge Therry reflected on his decision to send his daughters to England:

It was his misfortune that when his family came to the age to be placed in an educational institution of a higher order, the convent of Subiaco was not

56 Roger Therry (Sydney) to Prior Peter Wilson, 24 November 1841 (Birt File L106). Joseph Peter Wilson (1798–1888): educated at Downside; clothed 1819; ordained priest 1827; prior 1840–1854; nominated bishop of Hobart Town in 1841, but declined.

57 New Hall School, in the village of Boreham near Chelmsford was founded in 1642 in Belgium by the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre and moved to its English location in 1799. Therry gave to two of his children, the names of his political heroes – George Canning and William Huskisson.

58 The Franciscan nuns had left Bruges in Belgium, and arrived in England in 1794 to avoid persecution during the French Revolution

59 *Colonial Times* (Hobart) 5 February 1853, 2.

It has been incorrectly commented concerning Ann that she 'married – outside the Church – a certain Mr. Ward, a notorious anti-Catholic bigot' (Marie-Therese Malone, 'An Obit list and brief history of the nuns of 'Subiaco'. Rydalmere, and the Benedictine Abbey, Pennant Hills', *Tjurunga*, 28 (1985), 48)

in existence, and the ladies who conducted it were not in the colony; the result was that he sent home two daughters to be educated in a convent in England, whence one had not yet returned. Had Subiaco been in existence, he could assure the meeting that he would never have sent one of his daughters out of the colony for the purpose of acquiring an education. (Cheers.) It was a matter for the greatest congratulation to parents to be enabled to send their children to educational establishments — whether convents or colleges — near home, because thereby parents and children were enabled to maintain that mutual sympathy which was so desirable, and which could not be so well preserved where a long distance intervened.⁶⁰

Interestingly, he did not include his son in these expressions of regret.

The occasion of Therry's reminiscence about his daughters sailing to England for Catholic education, was a public meeting held at St. Mary's Seminary, for the purpose of collecting subscriptions with the view of presenting to his Grace the Archbishop some suitable testimonial of the esteem and confidence of the Catholics of the archdiocese.

Polding had just returned from sixteen months in Europe accompanied by a new President for Lyndhurst, Fr John McGirr, and three Benedictine nuns for Subiaco:

The Archbishop, as they were well aware, had, after a considerable absence, returned to the colony, and was gratefully received by his entire flock. His Grace had brought with him from Europe, those who would efficiently aid in laying the foundation in this colony of a system of education which would be equal to that imparted in any part of the world. They had already a convent at Subiaco, which, as an educational establishment, was equal to any convent in England, and those ladies whom the Archbishop had now brought to the colony would aid in maintaining the character of the institution, or improve it if that were possible. (Cheers) ... What a pride, what a glory, therefore, was it not to the country to have such an institution as that at Subiaco! (Cheers). At Lyndhurst, too, they had an institution in the college established there, which supplied a similar deficit formerly experienced in the means for educating boys. (Cheers.) No object was dearer to the heart of the bishop than to render those institutions as efficient as possible, and to supply similar establishments; and if he were asked to name one of the greatest claims which the Archbishop had on their gratitude, he would name those two institutions to which he had just referred. (Cheers) It was a sad thing to reflect that hitherto numbers of colonists in the possession of wealth had not enjoyed the opportunity of giving their children an education of the higher class — of making them acquainted with those books and with those arts and sciences, the

60 *Freeman's Journal*, 16 February 1856, 2

knowledge of which so much elevated all who came within their influence. The very foundations, indeed, of the happiness, the greatness, and the glory of every country depended on the education of the people (Cheers).⁶¹

In his 1861 editorials against sending Catholic boys to Europe, the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* had Archbishop Polding in mind when he referred to 'unwearied and single-minded exertions' in providing Catholic education at Lyndhurst College and St. Mary's Seminary:

We regard it not only as an act of folly, but as a decided want of patriotism, a depreciation of the institutions of the colony, an insult to common sense, and a discouragement to those by whose unwearied and single-minded exertions educated and talented men have been brought from the mother country to establish a high standard of education amongst us. We regard it not only as an act of folly, but as a decided want of patriotism, a depreciation of the institutions of the colony, an insult to common sense, and a discouragement to those by whose unwearied and single-minded exertions educated and talented men have been brought from the mother country to establish a high standard of education amongst us.⁶²

In February 1861, a letter from 'a Catholic Parent' was published in the secular newspaper, the *Empire*. Its content was a clear indication that it was written by a parent of one of the boys sent to Ireland for education. It was scathing in its assessment of Lyndhurst:

Catholic boys have been latterly sent to Europe (I beg to inform the Editor of the Freeman, who is as well aware of the fact as I am), not because they could not pick up a little Greek and Latin, with four books of Euclid, a little plain geometry, with a spice of all the other 'ologies', in the colony, but because there is in the colony no educational establishment which combines with the means of giving a finished liberal education the opportunity of acquiring the habits and tone of gentlemen ... There is no use in concealing the fact: we Catholics are well aware that the boys leaving Lyndhurst with vulgar habits, are rude in their manners, adopt the lowest colonial phraseology; and in: a word, when they have been a short time in the world become even faster than those we have been accustomed to designate members of the "Cabbage tree mob." ...

On the whole, such an education will cost considerably less – although the cost is the last consideration – than one had in the colony. Who then, will have the hardihood except the "authorised" editor of the FJ, and his

⁶¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 February 1856.

⁶² *Freeman's Journal*, 26 January 1861, 2.

St. Mary's Seminary closed at the end of 1861 and was converted into a 'model school' for training teachers.

employers, to say that he would prefer the latter to the former? In fact, and I may as well in one sentence, condense my meaning – Lyndhurst College, as at present constituted, is a decided failure, and has no chance of winning the confidence of the Catholic community, and preventing them sending their children to Europe, unless it is thoroughly re-organised and efficiently governed.

I am, Sir, &c,

A CATHOLIC PARENT, February 6.⁶³

This letter elicited a feisty response from 'a Catholic son', in which a defence of Polding was central:

Oh, shame, "Catholic Parent", thus to insult the reverend hairs of your Archbishop, a thorough gentleman in every respect as men of every creed acknowledge – a man "ad unguem factus" of manners so refined, that a child feels at home in his presence – of gentleness and wisdom far beyond what my feeble pen can portray. He it is who has watched with more than the solicitude of a parent over these students ...⁶⁴

'Catholic Parent' replied, restating the intention of his letter:

'I did not write originally on the above educational establishment [Lyndhurst] to open a newspaper war in your columns, but in order to defend the conduct of several gentlemen who get their children educated where they please, from the insolent aspersions of the Freeman's Journal.' He dismissed the reference to the 'Archbishop's reverend hairs' as 'mawkishly sentimental', and concluded slighting the Benedictines, whom he obviously identified with 'a Catholic Son': 'The writer does not indulge in strong waters, but if he did, any allusion to that subject comes with peculiarly bad grace from parties not remarkable for their observance of the vow of abstinence, any more than any other vow!'⁶⁵

The Yass boys were destined for St Bridget's Seminary at Tullamore in King's County, Ireland, an institution founded by Fr Patrick Dunne, in 1860. Dunne had been a colleague of Bermingham and McAlroy in the diocese of Melbourne, where they combined in opposition to Bishop Goold. Dunne returned to Ireland via Rome in 1858; Bermingham and McAlroy had been received by Polding into the Archdiocese in 1857. Knowing that the Yass boys were being sent to Dunne's seminary, Polding referred to it dismissively in a letter to Goold: 'Dunne is President of a College at Tullamore, in which gratuitous education will be given to Students

⁶³ *Empire*, 7 February 1861, 8.

⁶⁴ *Empire*, 8 February 1861, 8. '*ad unguem factus homo*': a man accomplished to his fingertips (Horace).

⁶⁵ *Empire*, 11 February 1861, 3.

for the Australian Mission. What a pity such an Institution is in such hands!’⁶⁶ It seems that none of the Yass boys proceeded from this minor seminary to complete studies for the priesthood. The Bermingham experiment was not repeated by Irish clergy in Australia.⁶⁷

Throughout 1861 the *Freeman's Journal* kept up its promotion of Lyndhurst, reporting on the university successes of its students, and in September welcoming a development in the education of boys in Sydney - with the closing of St Mary's Seminary and its transformation into a 'model school' for the training of teachers for Catholic Denominational Schools, the number of students at Lyndhurst would be increased, and the College would be 'turned into an institution which will spread its influence throughout the archdiocese'.⁶⁸ However, in 1865 Polding was despondent about the futures of both Lyndhurst and Subiaco, as expressed in a letter from Orange to Mother Walburge Wallis: 'I cannot hear of any children for Subiaco. Two or so Publicans in good business have daughters they ought to send ... Nor can I find any students for Lyndhurst. There is an apathy about Education that is astounding. Every miserable sect has its Establishment, and flourishing in number too. The catholic body alone careless on that vital point. The consequence will be that their children will occupy an inferior grade in Society to the great detriment of Religion.'⁶⁹

The College was closed with indecent haste by Archbishop Bede Vaughan soon after the death of Archbishop Polding. In the obituary of Archbishop Polding published in Newcastle the day after his death, 16 March 1877, his founding of Lyndhurst was fondly recalled:

In 1851 His Grace interested himself warmly in the establishment of a college for the Catholic youth of the community, and his labors were blessed with success. On the 10th February in that year was founded Lyndhurst College, which is, at the time we write, a most useful and

66 Polding to Goold, 20 January 1861 (PL III.2-3)

67 There were individual cases of young men being sent to Europe for education. Bathurst architect Edward Gell sent his son Edward Augustine (1867-1951) to Oscott College in England to complete his secondary education. Back in Bathurst, young Edward decided to enter the local seminary and was soon sent by his Bishop to Rome, to Propaganda College, to complete his priestly formation. He was ordained at the Lateran Basilica in 1894. Edward, parish priest of Ryde, and his sister Frances became major benefactors of Eileen O'Connor and Our Lady's Nurses for the Poor in the Coogee suburb of Sydney.

68 *Freeman's Journal*, 4 September 1861, 4.

69 Polding to Mother Walburge Wallis, 20 June 1865 (PL III.184-185). Mother Walburge (Ruth Woods) Wallis (1831-1902): born on Guernsey; arrived in Australia and entered Subiaco 1853; elected first Prioress 1864.

flourishing institution.⁷⁰

Eight weeks later, on 5 May, the *Evening News* contained the following notice:

We are informed that some important changes are about to take place in the management of the Roman Catholic College at Lyndhurst. It is reported that the president, Father Dwyer, has resigned, and that the whole of the professors have received notice to leave, preparatory to new arrangements.⁷¹

Despite Father Dwyer's denial two days later, the Lyndhurst estate was offered for sale 'in allotments' in newspapers on 21 July;⁷² throughout September and October, the public auction of all furniture and effects of the College – including 75 bedsteads, hair-mattresses and bed linen, school forms and desks – was announced.⁷³ The money from the sale of the estate was available for Cardinal Moran, Vaughan's successor in 1884, to fund the building of St Patrick's National Seminary at Manly, which opened in January 1889.

⁷⁰ *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 17 March 1877, 8.

⁷¹ *Evening News*, 5 May 1877, 4.

⁷² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 1877, 9.

⁷³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 September 1877, 12.

JOHANN HINTERÖCKER AND JULIAN TENISON WOODS: FRIENDS, KINDRED SPIRITS GROUNDED IN THE EARTH, FIRED WITH THE GOSPEL

Janice Tranter and Roderick O'Brien*

Introduction



Fr Johann Hinteröcker

In the *Catholic Encyclopedia* for 1907, Henry Cleary wrote: “Two gifted scientists of the Archdiocese were Father Hinteröcker, S.J., a skilled naturalist. and Father Julian Tenison Woods, a prolific writer on Australian geology.”¹ 6 October 2022 is the 150th anniversary of death of Father Johann Hinteröcker S.J. 7 October is the anniversary of the death of Father Julian Tenison Woods. This article puts the spotlight on the story and significance of the friendship of these two priest-scientists. Their friendship held firm in the profound events of their time. While in Australia there is growing awareness of Woods as Father Founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, missionary and scientist,² Hinteröcker may need an introduction, which will be given below.

- 1 Henry Cleary: “Adelaide”, *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (1907) Robert Appleton Company. New York, 140
- 2 Margaret Press, *Julian Tenison Woods: ‘Father Founder’*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, 1994; Anne Player, ‘Julian Tenison Woods: the interaction of Science and Religion’, MA thesis, 1991, ANU; Anne Player, ‘Julian Tenison Woods – Scientist’, *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of NSW*, 1989, Vol 122, Parts 3-4, 109-118 available at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/46154954#page/329/mode/1up>; Mary Cresp and Janice Tranter, ‘Julian Tenison Woods: Itinerant Missioner’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 2016, 1-9, <https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/achs-journal-2016-37-1.pdf>; Mary Cresp and Janice Tranter, ‘Julian Tenison Woods: from entangled histories to history shaper’, *Australasian Catholic Record*, Vol 95, No. 3, July 2018, 286–303.

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First meeting: Penola



Fr Julian Tenison Woods

Hinteröcker and Woods met in Penola in January 1867, a few weeks before Woods left his parish of ten years. The newly ordained Bishop Lawrence Sheil came on his pastoral visit, bringing the recently arrived Austrian Jesuit as companion.³ In this south-east corner of his diocese, Sheil could introduce to the learned Jesuit not only a dedicated priest, but a scholar and recognised natural scientist. And more. At Penola, Sheil could introduce a priest with an idea for a new religious order of women to bring religious education to the poor, scattered children of the bush, a priest to whom he, as Bishop, had given permission to found this order.⁴ Here Hinteröcker would also meet Mary MacKillop, the first member of the order. Woods and Mary had begun their venture on the previous 19 March, St Joseph's day. Hinteröcker was to witness the new order in its swaddling clothes, at its birthplace at Penola.

Who was this Jesuit? Born on New Year's Day 1820, Johann Hinteröcker came from Spitz, Austria, where his family farmed near the Danube. He studied at the Jesuit college in Linz, and entered the Jesuits when 19 years old. By 1846, his passion for natural science was already evident, and he was teaching "natural history" in Lemberg. He was ordained in 1851. From 1852 to 1865 Hinteröcker taught at the Jesuit College in Freinberg, near Linz (now the Kollegium Aloisianum). There he cemented his reputation both as a teacher and as scientist by establishing an extensive garden and an arboretum.⁵ Hinteröcker roamed the countryside collecting plants, contributing to the growth of science in west Austria, and publishing in learned journals. His recognition came, not from university degrees, but from membership of learned societies.

- 3 "Our correspondent": "His Lordship Bishop Sheil at Penola" *Border Watch*, Wednesday 16 January 1867, 2. See also *Border Watch* 5 and 23 January 1867.
- 4 *Memoirs of Reverend J. E. Tenison Woods*, vol 2, 26. Typescript copy. Lochinvar Archives.
- 5 Alfred Zerlik, "Zum 100. Todestag von P. Johann Nepomuk Hinteröcker S. J., dem Begründer des ersten botanischen Gartens in Linz " https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/APO_29_0007-0008.pdf

But Hinteröcker discerned another calling. He applied to his superiors to come to Australia and join a proposed mission to the aboriginal people. In due course, he set out for Australia, accompanied by Br Eberhard. They departed Linz and sailed from Trieste on 28 November 1865, finally arriving at Sevenhill on 1 February 1866. As scientist, he was still active on the journey. The collections at the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne contain more than sixty items collected by Hinteröcker, and one of these is from King George's Sound in Western Australia.⁶ No doubt this was from their first landing in Australia, and he continued collecting while in South Australia.

What did Hinteröcker find in meeting Woods?⁷ In the nearly three weeks visit, travelling with Sheil and Woods through the vast parish, he had time to get to know the young English priest, twelve years his junior, intelligent, extremely hardworking and keen, informed observer of nature.⁸ Woods, like himself, received recognition for his scientific work not from university degrees, but from his published work and from membership of scientific societies.

Hinteröcker saw Woods at home with his parishioners and witnessed their affection and respect for their pastor. They had learned with sorrow a few months before of Woods' appointment to Adelaide and were soon to hold a farewell. Hinteröcker was drawn into the lively community of Penola. Mary MacKillop writes of Woods leading the eager Hinteröcker and a group through the magnificent Naracoorte caves.⁹ Young adult parishioners had ridden to join the excursion. In

6 The Australasian Virtual Herbarium at https://avh.ala.org.au/occurrences/search?q=collector_text%3AHinteroecker+AND+collection_uid%3Aco55

7 This is the place for a profound apology. One of your authors, Roderick O'Brien, has suggested that Hinteröcker taught Woods at Sevenhill. In fact, Hinteröcker did not arrive until 1866, and Woods left Sevenhill before Christmas, 1856. Please correct this error, which appears in "Saigon, Cholon and Julian Tenison Woods" *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, (2017) 38–42 https://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2017_achs_journal.pdf, and in "Introducing Julian Tenison-Woods and Malacca" *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, (Dec, 2017) vol 150 (2) 179–182 <https://royalsoc.org.au/council-members-section/404-v150-2>

8 Woods welcomed the visitors at Robe on 3 January. The visit concluded at Mount Gambier on 23 January.

9 These are a World Heritage site since 1994. Woods' writing on the caves of S.E South Australia remains foundational. See Elery Hamilton-Smith, (2006) "No Ordinary Man: Tenison Woods and the Naracoorte Caves", *Alcheringa: An Australasian Journal of Palaeontology*, 30:sup1, 187–193, Elery Hamilton Smith, 'Australia's First Karst Scientist', Karstaway Conference Proceedings, Charles Sturt University 2009, <http://stl.asflib.net/JNS/AUNat/ASF/ASF-ConfProc/ASF-27thConfMat-2009-Karstaway/ASF27-TennWoods.pdf>

an amusing incident there was 'laughter echoing through the caves.' Mary also describes a luncheon during the clergymen's visit, where the atmosphere was of a fun-loving family.¹⁰

At Penola Hinteröcker saw the carefully designed stone St Joseph's church, with the Trinity represented in the leadlight windows. He saw also the churches built by Woods at Robe and Mount Gambier.¹¹ He saw Woods' ability to work with the people and achieve significant results. He would have known Woods' two major works written in the Penola years amid the huge travel involved in his pastoral mission.¹²

Hinteröcker would have appreciated the frequented Penola attractions: Woods' rock collection and the garden near church. Here, wrote Mary, 'choice and rare shrubs flourished', that Woods had found and carried 'many a mile' through his vast parish. Mary wrote, too, of the plant that Woods would introduce, the Sisters of St Joseph, as 'one young plant that taking root and flourishing in the fertile ground of South Australia, would spread thence through the colonies.'¹³

Hinteröcker observed this new plant when Bishop Sheil visited St Joseph's school and examined Mary's pupils for Confirmation. It was the highpoint of the pastoral visit: Woods' plan for religious for the schools was under scrutiny. Woods and Hinteröcker appear to have been present during the examination after which Sheil gave Mary his ring to kiss and called her Sister Mary, the title used thence for Mary.¹⁴ At the Mass with Confirmation on the following Sunday, Hinteröcker sang the Missa Cantata while Woods played the harmonium, accompanying the Sunday School choir whom he had trained. Hinteröcker was a central witness to the affirmation of Woods' plan and to the new religious order at its birthplace.

Hinteröcker saw Woods' sound abilities and his longing to do something for the poor children of the bush, growing up with no Christian faith, and no one to teach them. Did Woods share with him, too, the self-doubt and fear in taking on the launch of a religious order? Did he tell Hinteröcker that it was trust in St Joseph that

10 Mother Mary of the Cross MacKillop, *Julian Tenison Woods: A Life, Canonisation Edition*, St Paul's, Strathfield, 2010, 80

11 St Joseph's, opened two years after Woods went to his parish, has been demolished and replaced, as has St Teresa's at Mount Gambier. Mary Star of the Sea at Robe remains.

12 *Geological Observations in South Australia*, London, 1862, *A History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia*, London, 1865 2 vols.

13 MacKillop, *Woods*, 51

14 Press, *Woods*, 79.

gave him the strength to persevere?¹⁵ Love of St Joseph was strong in the Ignatian tradition. Hinteröcker also grew to know the steady young woman, casting her lot with Woods in the new venture.

For Woods, the visit of Hinteröcker was unexpected encouragement. Here was a learned man, a natural scientist with whom there was kinship in science, and especially, here was a priest of a religious order, seeing the beginning of the new religious order he was founding. Religious life was dear to Woods. For years he had longed to be a priest in a missionary order. His priestly ordination came in Adelaide, but his heart remained close to religious life.¹⁶ His chosen motto was *Vota Vita Mea* ('My vows [are] my life').¹⁷ Hinteröcker's meeting Woods at Penola showed him the man Woods was. Mary MacKillop summed up the impact of the visit on the two men: Hinteröcker and Woods 'became great friends ...[they] were in many ways, kindred spirits.'¹⁸ Their meeting at Penola was the basis of their friendship and the support Hinteröcker gave to Woods and the Sisters in Adelaide.

Adelaide

In April 1867 Woods arrived in Adelaide. Along with usual pastoral responsibilities, he was Bishop's Secretary, Director General of Catholic Education, Chairman of the Board and Inspector of Schools through the diocese and was about to launch with Mary the new foundation of Sisters. Margaret Press, not given to exaggeration, wrote of his 'superhuman effort' in taking on these tasks.¹⁹

Hinteröcker undertook his duties at Sevenhill, and his ministry among the local indigenous families. But there were few in the Sevenhill area, and the proposal for a mission further north did not proceed. In 1867, Bishop Sheil asked Hinteröcker to come to Adelaide, because of the shortage of priests. In 1868, Hinteröcker's superiors proposed that he return to Austria. However, he was so admired in Adelaide that the local clergy petitioned for him to remain, and this petition was accepted.²⁰

In Adelaide, both priest-scientists gave themselves wholeheartedly to tasks that

15 Woods to MacKillop, 12 June 1867. Woods had spoken 'with fear and trembling' of his plan to the Bishop. *Memoirs*, Vol 2, 25–26; Conference on the month of St Joseph to the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, 29 February 1887. 'It is he who has helped me in all I have ever done'. Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Archives, Brisbane.

16 At Woods' request, he was invested with the Passionist habit before his death. Mary MacKillop knew Woods' long desire for religious life. MacKillop, *Woods*, 235.

17 Literally: vota= vows, vita mea= my life.

18 MacKillop, *Woods*, 80.

19 Press, *Woods*, 89.

20 Anon.: 'Death of Father Hinteröcker SJ' *The Irish Harp and Farmer's Herald*, 11 October 1872, 4.

left little time for scientific pursuits. This paper touches on their tasks, but the focus is rather on their friendship and support for each other, shown especially in significant occasions.

Woods was launching two radically new initiatives. From the first months he met stiff opposition to his plans for a Catholic school system. Mary MacKillop wrote that ‘his friend Father Hinteröcker encouraged him greatly, saying the work would be of the greatest importance, though he must “drink some bitter drops of the Chalice of the Lord”’.²¹ On 8 December 1867, six months after Mary and the Sisters, under Woods’ guidance, made their beginning in Adelaide, Mary mentions that on the First Communion day of hundreds of children, Hinteröcker celebrated a later Mass, assisted by Woods. In July 1868, Woods spoke at a concert for the Norwood schools.²² There is an impression of their working together, when possible. In the first few years, along with getting a school system off the ground by huge work through the diocese, Woods was regularly instructing the growing number of Sisters, imparting formation in the spirit of Joseph as well as arranging for schools where the Sisters would teach.

Hinteröcker accepted an appointment as the first parish priest of the Norwood area, stretching east from the city of Adelaide. He took up this appointment in February 1869, and set about building the parish church which still stands. The foundation stone was laid on 17 October 1869. Hinteröcker attended in a wheelchair, having fallen into the excavations for the cellar of the house, and broken his leg.²³ The Norwood church, dedicated to St Ignatius, was opened on 7 August 1870, and Woods preached at Vespers for the occasion. (Weather had prevented the opening on the feast of Ignatius.)

By the end of 1869, Woods was exhausted and overstretched. There were many difficulties. Opposition took a sinister turn from April 1870, after Woods reported to the Vicar John Smyth the sexual offences against children by Father Keating. Keating’s so-called friend, Father Charles Horan, declared openly that he would destroy Woods through the Sisters of St Joseph for revealing what he did.²⁴ Soon after, Smyth died, leaving Woods a veiled target, aimed at through hostility to the

21 MacKillop, *Woods*, 91. Mary’s words suggest that Hinteröcker gave further encouragement to Woods, which Woods shared with Mary

22 MacKillop, *Woods*, 101, 117.

23 Michael Head, *The Vine and the Branches: the Fruits of the Sevenhill Mission*, (2017) ATF Press, 44

24 Keating was dismissed as a result of Woods’ action. Woods said that ‘a large number of the clergy condemned’ him for revealing what he did, ‘but there was no doubt that’ he ‘was bound to do what he did and everyone could see this’. *Memoirs*, Vol 2, 42.

Sisters.²⁵ Opposition orchestrated by Horan continued to mount, with the sense of a storm about to burst.

At the opening of the Sisters' Franklin St Chapel of St Joseph Patron of the Universal Church on 19 March 1871, Hinteröcker preached, taking an unequivocal stand for Woods and the Sisters. 'It was only three years and nine months', he said, 'since the Sisters arrived. All who remembered their advent would also remember their small beginning, their poor means, their poor little convent. Looking back at the wonderful work which had sprung from so small a seed, it looked to him like the work of God'. He warned that those against the Josephite Institute might be fighting against God.²⁶

On St Ignatius day, July 1871, Woods preached at St Ignatius, Norwood,²⁷ then left Adelaide for a temporary task in Bathurst, arranged by Sheil with Bishop Quinn of Bathurst: Woods was to preach missions and locate a base for the Sisters. While he was absent, the anticipated storm burst: Mary was excommunicated and an attempt made to dismantle the order. Hinteröcker was one of the Jesuits who supported Mary and the Sisters in this time when the Jesuits quietly continued to bring Holy Communion to her. Woods could do nothing to help, kept in the eastern dioceses at Archbishop Polding's word. The five months of Mary's excommunication and the near disbandment of the order were in Woods' words 'a period of trial which for sorrow and heavy affliction had no parallel' in his life.²⁸

After the lifting of Mary's excommunication, Hinteröcker celebrated Mass at St Ignatius church on the feast of St Joseph, 19 March 1872 and preached powerfully on St Joseph. He spoke of Joseph's perplexity at Mary's pregnancy and said that those who follow St Joseph must like him endure trials. He preached again at Vespers, on the flight of St. Joseph into Egypt. 'He dwelt at some length on the obedience, humility, and firm faith of St. Joseph in not being scandalised at the apparent inability of the child Jesus, although the eternal Son of God, to save himself from the sword of Herod.' After preaching, he invited the Sisters to come

25 Press, *Woods*, 115; Marie Foale, *The Josephite Story*, St Joseph's Generalate, Sydney, 1989, 60; Paul Gardiner, *Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Positio Super Virtutibus*, Rome, 1989, Vol 1, 298, 339–40, 414; Vol 2 945; Woods, *Memoirs*, Vol 2, 40, 42, 45.

26 *The Chaplet and Advocate of the Children of Mary*, Adelaide, 31 March 1871, Adelaide; MacKillop, *Woods*, 151, 154. By March 1871 over seventy Sisters had been professed. Woods' handwritten Admission and Profession Register, Sisters of St Joseph archives, Adelaide. In March 1871 there were over 40 schools and institutions run by the Sisters. Foale, *Josephite Story*, 43.

27 Mary writes of his words and their significance. MacKillop, *Woods*, 153–4.

28 Woods, *Memoirs*, Vol 2, 45.

forward to be reinvested in their habits by his fellow Jesuit, Father Tappeiner. Many of the congregation were in tears.²⁹ Woods was in Sydney, at Polding's direction.

Hinteröcker stood by the religious order that he had seen at its birthplace, and seen grow in Adelaide. He stood by Woods and his work, in and through opposition and in Woods' enforced absence.

In June 1872, finally given permission to do so, Woods returned to Adelaide. He left again, for the last time, within two months, at the Bishops' direction to preach in the eastern colonies. Invited by the Jesuits, he celebrated Mass on the feast of St Ignatius at Norwood, assisted by Hinteröcker and Tappeiner and in the evening, preached again at Vespers, as he had done a year before.³⁰

The feasts of St Joseph and of St Ignatius in 1871 and 1872 show Hinteröcker and Woods standing by each other in the tasks they had undertaken, and were about to begin. Soon after the feast of St Ignatius, 1872, both left for missionary work, Woods to New South Wales and Hinteröcker to Tasmania.

Tasmania and Maitland Diocese

The dramatic events surrounding Woods and the Sisters of St Joseph were the subject of a formal enquiry for which Bishop Murphy of Hobart and Bishop Quinn of Bathurst came to Adelaide. This enquiry is beyond the scope of our short article.³¹ As a result of their meeting, Murphy invited Hinteröcker to preach missions and retreats in Tasmania. In August 1872 Hinteröcker sailed from Adelaide, reaching Hobart by 23 August. He preached a mission for the people and gave retreats for the priests and for the religious Sisters. On 26 September he left Hobart for Launceston to give a retreat to the priests and preach a mission, but on the way he caught pneumonia. He died after reaching Launceston. He was fifty-two.

Four days later, on 10 October, word reached Woods, then giving a mission in Branxton in Maitland diocese. He wrote to Mary on 11 October:

Yesterday... I received news of poor Fr Hinteröcker's death. I cannot describe what I feel after this sudden and awful blow. I never knew how much I loved the poor Father until now and my sorrow is deep indeed... I don't think he anticipated such a termination to his visit to Tasmania yet I

29 From *The Irish Harp*, March 1872, reference given by Colleen Power rsj Writing of this, Mary thinks of Father Woods' hearing of the event.

30 Woods, *Memoirs*, Vol 2, 49. Before leaving, Woods left his scientific books to the Jesuits, the rest to the diocesan library. Most of his personal papers were destroyed and many of his spiritual books including those on prayer and devotion to Mary had disappeared during his absence.

31 Press, *Woods*, 140–141.

am sure he did not cling to life. The loss is ours, not his. A beautiful death is too dear and alas! too rare a gem for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for us not to feel a kind of joy at it... How beautiful after all and in all is the sweet will of God..... He was a great benefactor to the Institute.... I am confident that our poor Father Hinteröcker is not now in need of our prayers. So good a religious, so zealous a priest, is long before this with God.³²

On 18 October Woods wrote to Mary from his next mission, Muswellbrook. He had had 'a very hard and trying week, hard because I have not been well.' He wrote of several matters, then repeated, 'I am not well this week, but nothing to signify... I felt F.H's death very keenly'.³³

Woods' and Hinteröcker's connection continued when Bishop Murphy invited Woods to Tasmania to continue the work Hinteröcker had begun. Woods arrived in Hobart on 25 February 1874 and preached a retreat for the priests and missions at the Cathedral and at St Joseph's church.³⁴ In April, following his friend's path, he went to Launceston to give the priests' retreat and preach missions. A devout Catholic here was William Paul Dowling, artist and photographer, who, after Hinteröcker's death, was asked to photograph the deceased missionary. Dowling and Woods knew each other in early 1855, when Dowling taught art at the Hobart school where Woods taught for a short time. Finding each other again, they renewed their friendship.³⁵

Kinship in life and death

Till the end of 1882 Woods continued preaching missions in the eastern colonies along with resuming scientific work.³⁶ When requests for missions ceased following the arrival of missionary orders, he accepted a request to do geological work in the Malay States. Three years later he returned to Australia in poor health and was an

32 Quoted in MacKillop, *Woods*, 26–7

33 18 October 1872, Sisters of St Joseph archives, Sydney.

34 Player, 'Woods' Movements' in Woods, 1991. Woods, *Memoirs*, 2, 55. Without naming Hinteröcker, Woods mentions a Jesuit had missioned in Tasmania before him. Woods was in radical pain and weakness while dictating the *Memoirs*, which ended within a few pages, when he was too ill to continue.

35 Did Dowling show Woods the photograph of his friend who had died eighteen months before? Dowling's daughter joined the Sisters of St Joseph. For Dowling's photographs of Woods and Hinteröcker see Robert Stevens, 'William Paul Dowling: artist, artist-photographer', in *Australiana*, November 2020, No. 4, 45–6. William-Paul-Downing.pdf: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:4f373a90-860e-38db-a234-4b162459a23f> For Dowling's daughter, see <https://www.ssjl.org.au/news-events/anniversaries/sr-m-john-dowling/>

36 In these years Woods also founded the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Brisbane and reinvigorated the Josephite foundation at Perthville in the Bathurst diocese.

invalid in Sydney till his death at the age of 56.

The month after Hinteröcker's death, Woods wrote in praise of his friend. The words could be applied to Woods, himself.

With him the study of nature and the love of God went hand in hand ... each new species of flower and insect was to him a new source of joy and thanksgiving to God. He was never idle. Either out amongst flowers or examining rocks, minerals, and zoological specimens, and always uniting such labours with some pious thought or aspiration. He was a true Christian philosopher. ... But it must not be thought that while he was thus zealous in the cause of science that he was less alive to his duties as a mission priest. His zeal was, on the contrary, of the most fervent kind. At any time he would leave his studies or his specimens and travel miles to find out some bad Catholic, or to help some waverer into the true Church. His patience and care with everyone were proverbial. ... In the hospital, in the asylum, and wherever he went, it seemed as if he could not do too much; ... he had no greater pleasure on this earth than fulfilling his duties as a priest.³⁷

Mary wrote of the 'remarkable fortitude with which he bore his suffering and the resignation with which he accepted his lot. Instead of the quick transit to the unseen world ... he had to endure nearly three years of slow torture with no hope of sufficient recovery to complete his unfinished work or to arrange the abundant material gathered with unsparing labour and energy during his travels- sufficient for several volumes.'³⁸ Mary commented that the words he had written on the death of his friend, Father Hinteröcker, 'exactly seventeen before, are applicable to himself:

He did not cling to life. The loss is ours, not his. A beautiful death is too dear and alas! too rare a gem for the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for us not to feel a kind of joy at it... How beautiful after all and in all is the sweet will of God!³⁹

Woods and Hinteröcker were friends, men of science and priestly dedication. They knew kinship with the earth. They were men of uncompromising integrity. Their identity and friendship was grounded in their zeal for God and God's work. Their friendship was ingrained in the Ignatian tradition, friendship in the Lord.

37 J.E. Tenison Woods, Editorial. *Chaplet and Southern Cross*, Adelaide, 30 November 1872.

38 MacKillop, *Woods*, 234.

39 MacKillop, *Woods*, 236; <https://www.sosj.org.au/anniversary-of-father-founder-julian-tenison-woods/>

THE ATELIER OF THE ST. DOMINIC'S PRIORY: CASH FOR BEAUTY AND BEAUTY FOR CASH

Jo Vandeppeer*

Introduction

This is the captivating story of an ecclesiastical and secular embroidery studio operating from 1883 through to the 1930s in North Adelaide, South Australia. Colourful silks must surely have been a contrast to the dusty exterior of country parishes at a time when sandstone churches were rising from the driest colony in the driest continent.

South Australian ecclesiastical embroidery was highly regarded in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Two Anglican guilds and one Catholic ecclesiastical atelier embroidered a range of objects for the cost of materials. Mostly, the designs were original. Commissions were executed for destinations around Australia and beyond our shores. Of all the ecclesiastical embroidery made by South Australian women, the work held in the St. Dominic's Priory Museum is arguably the finest. This is because the founding Community arrived with the skills to create such celestial beauty.¹

The establishment of the St. Dominic's atelier is a story of pragmatism; an example of colonial South Australian women leveraging existing skills to commercial enterprise. This paper investigates the neglected history of the only Catholic atelier in South Australia. It demonstrates how the Dominican Sisters of North Adelaide navigated the duality of philanthropic and commercial work and it explores a recognisable design style. In doing so, it realises the Community's undercurrent of resilience beneath the shimmer of their ecclesiastical embroidery.

The Embroidery Scene

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was a renaissance of ecclesiastical embroidery. This renaissance created financial opportunities for women to use their existing needlework skills beyond their own domestic needs. Renewed interest in luxurious embroideries led to a *Special Loan Exhibition* at South

1 For the purposes of clarification, upper case Community refers to the Community of Sisters whereas lowercase community to the general public.

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Kensington (UK) of embroidered objects in 1873.² The exhibition had far-reaching effects. It set the scene for women to earn a respectable living from needlework at a time when an independently earned income was radical for middle and upper-class females. The committee of the *Special Loan Exhibition* influenced this social change because their curation prioritised ecclesiastical embroidery, highlighting the historical significance. The same historical exploration of embroidery was taken up by leading designers and architects such as the Gothic revivalists including George Edmund Street (1824–1881), William Eamer Kempe (1837–1907), George Frederick Bodley (1827–1907) and John Sedding (1836–1868), to name but a few. Inspired by texts such as the *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament*, they specially designed embroidered altar cloths, banners and other glorifying decorative textiles as elements of an entire architectural plan to beautify Holy Communion.³ Crucially, the designs were made into finished products by ateliers of women needleworkers and so in this way, women could earn money from embroidery.

In the context of Victorian societal mores, an income derived from decorative needlework, especially that connected to the church was particularly acceptable as a form of employment for gentlewomen. After all, for centuries prior to the advent of Art Needlework's popularity, nuns had used their embroidery skills to produce ecclesiastical textiles. Adding to this acceptability, the committee of the *Special Loan Exhibition* took it upon themselves to categorise the ecclesiastical embroidery stitches into five 'Opus' sections, including the more well-known Opus Anglicanum. This categorisation further legitimised needlework executed for income because it suggested a morally acceptable practise, a perception of vital importance to the Victorian-era middle and upper-class gentlewoman. In fact, the second, larger exhibition of Art Needlework at the South Kensington Museum in 1884 was titled '*The Exhibition of Ancient Ecclesiastical Embroidery*', a title that reinforced the morality attached to the practise.

Ecclesiastical embroidery and its secular sister 'Art Needlework' became integrally linked. Although the term Art Needlework could be a non-spiritual

2 Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, South Kensington Museum. *Catalogue of the Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework Made Before 1800*, Held in 1873. London: Chiswick Press, 1874. An edition owned by Mrs Howe is held by Embroiderers' Guild of South Australia, complete with a letter from Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, known as Princess Helena, patron of the Royal School of Needlework.

3 A. Welby Pugin, *Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume: compiled and illustrated from Ancient Authorities and Examples*, London: Henry. G. Bohn, 1884. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugins (1812–1852).

expression for decorative embroidery, it used the same stitches and skills required for ecclesiastical vestment production. For example, the committee of the *Special Loan Exhibition* in 1873 determined that Opus Plumarium employed feather and long stitch, crewel (long) stitch, satin and embroidery stitch. All of these stitches were also particularly useful in Art Needlework and could be applied to any range of secular objects. The division between ecclesiastical embroidery and Art Needlework was further blurred with a host of needlework organisations producing a range of different ecclesiastical or commercial objects. For example, secular institutions with royal patronage such as the Royal School of Art Needlework (UK) and the Ladies' Work Society in Sloane Street (UK) catered for the skill development of gentlewomen in danger of destitution and offered morally acceptable employment. Yet this very same concept was embraced by groups of ecclesiastical women. For instance, the School for Ecclesiastical Embroidery at 33 Queen Square, Bloomsbury (UK) produced ecclesiastical commissions in the Art Needlework style designed by John Sedding under the supervision of his sister Isabella Sedding.⁴ Women could board at the school and earn a wage dependent on their skill level.⁵ Thus, the blurring of boundaries between secular and ecclesiastical needlework made space for a wide range of opportunities for women. As a result, the secular and convent ateliers producing embroidery shared two common factors: their agency for skill development of women in danger of destitution; and their execution of commissions from leading architects and designers.

The South Australian Art Needlework Scene

The South Australian public were made aware of the renaissance of historical needlework and the ateliers' combined capacity for social work and high-quality embroidery. This movement was brought to their attention from those who travelled or had personal links in England but also by the press.⁶ Always, embroidery institutions were mentioned with historical discussions of Opus Anglicanum and

4 Mary Schoeser. *The Watts Book of Embroidery: English Church Embroidery 1833–1953*, Great Britain: Watts & Co, 1998, 50. Schoeser asserts that the designers William Curtis Brangwyn (1839–1907) and the Seddings: Edmund and John Dando Sedding (1838–1891) are “originators” of the Art Needlework style in ecclesiastical embroidery.

5 Mary Schoeser. *The Watts Book of Embroidery: English Church Embroidery 1833–1953*, 54.

6 For example, Frances Wright moved between London and Adelaide during this time and sent back information on ecclesiastical designs to her contacts. Mrs Harmer did the same. “Notebook of St Peter’s Cathedral Guild,” State Library of South Australia, SRG/94/A1/51.

other more ancient embroidery arts from around the world.⁷ At the same time, the secular Arts & Crafts Movement gained considerable ground in the South Australian colony. The leading Arts & Crafts protagonist William Morris's firm 'Morris & Co' championed Art Needlework. Their Art Needlework atelier, operated by May Morris (1862-1938), was the epitome of the symbiotic relationship between Art Needlework and ecclesiastical embroidery, for not only did Morris & Co produce secular embroidery, it also had a business arm that supplied vestments for churches.⁸ Families such as the Barr Smiths and Rymills imported expensive secular domestic objects directly into Adelaide, including embroidery kits from Morris & Co.⁹ In the colonial environment of self-help, those without the wherewithal of the Barr Smiths or Rymills who couldn't afford to import directly, but still wished to emulate the fashionable Arts & Crafts style themselves, could enrol in local applied arts courses in the Arts & Crafts style. These were taught at the Adelaide School of Design. In fact, in collaboration with Anglican ecclesiastical guild members, the School of Design established an Art Needlework Society which held high profile exhibitions described in detail in the Adelaide papers. In this context, 'Morris work' became a vernacular term often used by the Adelaide press to explain the Morris & Co 'Arts & Crafts look'.¹⁰

Therefore, even though the embroidery renaissance occurred nearly ten thousand miles away, the South Australian public were aware of the resurgence of ecclesiastical embroidery from religious ateliers like the School for Ecclesiastical Embroidery, as well as the style of Art Needlework produced by secular ateliers such as Morris & Co, the School of Art Needlework and The Ladies' Work Society. This awareness resulted in an environment where South Australians seeking embroidered objects were poised to embrace the work of home-grown embroidery ateliers. This is the scene into which the founding Community of St. Dominic's sailed.

7 See for example "Ladies' Column," *Observer*, 17 December 1881, 34. See also "Ecclesiastical Embroidery," *The Mount Barker Courier and Onkaparinga and Gumeracha Advertiser*, 2 May 1884, 3. (St Katherine's was referred to as "the Ladies School of Embroidery," in the South Australian press.)

8 William Morris originally attended Oxford to train as an Anglo-Catholic clergyman so it is perhaps unsurprising that his Morris & Co also had a business arm that supplied vestments for churches.

9 Christopher Menz, *Morris & Co*, Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2002.

10 For example "Our Ladies' Letter: Adelaide Gossip," *Evening Journal*, 8 September 1894, 7, and "School of Design: Student and Art Club's Exhibition," *The Advertiser*, 6 September 1894, 7.

The Background of the Atelier of St. Dominic's Priory, North Adelaide

Just two months after arriving in the colony of South Australia in 1883, Mother Rose Columba Adams (1832-1891) wrote "Our future still looks most uncertain. Two priests have sent orders for vestments and wanted by Christmas if possible."¹¹ In response to the context in which they found themselves, the English Dominican Sisters fell back upon their needlework skills for remuneration. They were on the other side of the world from their convent at Stone in England without an income and Mother Rose Columba Adams was not overstating her Community's financial precariousness. Yet, in the very next sentence, she provided the solution: needlework.

So how did the North Adelaide Community of the English Third Order of St. Dominic come to be in South Australia? The founding Community were enticed to Adelaide by two newly converted female members of the Baker family of *Morialta* to establish another hospital. When the wealthy Baker women approached Bishop Christopher Augustine Reynolds (1834-1893) about establishing an English order of Dominicans, he was receptive because as the scholar Margaret Press, RSJ describes, Catholic doctors had for some time been appealing to Reynolds about the discrimination against both Catholic patients and Catholic women wishing to train as nurses at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.¹²

In comparison with other denominations, the Catholic community in Adelaide into which the Dominican nuns arrived was a minority.¹³ As Press points out, for decades afterwards, the Catholics continued to be a smaller congregation.¹⁴ In this

11 Letter to J.M.D.C. 28 November 1883. Right. Rev. W.R. Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir of Mother Mary Rose Columba Adams, O.P.: First Prioress St Dominic's Convent and Foundress of the Perpetual Adoration at North Adelaide*, London: Burns & Oates, Limited, 1895, 247.

12 Margaret Press, RSJ, *Three Women of Faith*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2003, 68. (Religious Sisters of St. Joseph use the postnominal initials RSJ after their names.) This was an ongoing dispute. The Anglicans had previously been concerned at the rate of patients conversion to Catholicism. See Cheryl Willis. *Miss Marryat's Circle: A not so distant past*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2018, 59-60.

13 Rev. Fr. R.A. Morrison, Diocesan Archivist. "The Priest Who Said the First Mass in Sth. Australia," *Southern Cross*, 6 October, 1944, 3 and "Progress of the Colony - South Australian Almanac for 1841," *South Australian Register*, 2 January, 1841, 3. See also, W.B. Ullathorne in Right. Rev. W.R. Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir of Mother Mary Rose Columba Adams, O.P.: First Prioress St Dominic's Convent and Foundress of the Perpetual Adoration at North Adelaide*, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1895, 204

14 Dissenting groups committed to freedom of religion, such as the Methodists and Congregationalists, established churches and parishes throughout Adelaide and the regional areas. Control of the Adelaide newspapers was in the hands of Baptists. The home-grown Sisters of St. Josephs established schools for the poor in the regional

and a wider context beyond the scope of this essay, the conversion to Catholicism of Elizabeth (Bessie) Anstice Baker (1849–1914) was an anomaly for a wealthy, Protestant South Australian woman. By the time Bessie wrote to Bishop Reynolds to secure a second Dominican establishment in Adelaide, she had already attended two audiences with Pope Leo XIII and begun her solicitous visits to the Dominican Community at Stone in the Diocese of Birmingham. It would have been difficult for Bishop Reynolds *not* to take the well-travelled, intellectual and proactive young woman seriously. In fact, Reynolds welcomed the Bakers generous offer to fund the fares and the overall establishment of an English Dominican Community to service a new hospital. After “a flow of correspondence between Adelaide and the Dominican Superior at Stone,” it was determined that an English Dominican foundation would be established in North Adelaide to support a Catholic hospital run by English Catholic Sisters which would be open to all, despite creed.¹⁵ In preparation, for the fortnight leading up to their departure for South Australia, two of the nuns visited the Irish Sisters of Charity in Dublin to study hospital work. The Community’s passage was paid for by Mrs Baker and her daughter Bessie, with the assurance of annual funding of £400 (which Bishop Reynolds added to with a further £40 a year), plus paid passage home if desired.¹⁶ In August 1883, the *Orient* arrived at Largs Bay conveying Mother Rose Columba Adams together with five others of the founding Community: Sisters Francis Philomena Ullathorne (1850–1928), Mary Raymond Lundberry(1840–1931), Anne Joseph McDonnell (–1910), Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Ward (1846–1894) and Mary Ermenilda Joyes (1833–1886), and two postulants: Mary Rose Mayo (1868–1931) and Dominic Teresa Winthrop (–1919).¹⁷ On shore, the welcoming committee of the city’s Catholic minority included the Very Reverend Dean Kennedy, several priests and Mrs and Miss Baker.¹⁸

areas but were in conflict with the Catholic and Protestant community. Although the Irish Dominican sisters from Cabra had been seconded to Adelaide, it was for the purposes of establishing “education of the higher classes,” of daughters. Margaret Press, RSJ, *Three Women of Faith*, Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2003, 68 and “Reception of Dr. Shiel, Catholic Bishop of Adelaide,” *South Australian Register*, 5 January, 1869, 5.

15 Margaret Press, RSJ, *Three Women of Faith*, 69.

16 Margaret Press, RSJ has carefully documented Elizabeth Baker’s controversial conversion to Catholicism and her role instigating a branch of the Community from Stone to establish themselves in North Adelaide in Margaret Press, RSJ, *Three Women of Faith*, 69. *The exact amount of annual stipend varies from £300 to £800 according to the source.

17 *The South Australian Advertiser*, 27 Aug 1883, 4.

18 “Our Catholic Institutions: XIII. St Dominic’s Priory, North Adelaide: A Cloistered Paradise,” *Southern Cross*, 18 May 1900, 10.

The establishment of a Dominican hospital in North Adelaide was largely supported by the people of South Australia and the Sisters entered an environment where progress was contingent upon input, particularly amongst the women of the colony. For example, the Bakers took a mortgage of £2000 and used their own properties as security on the lease of a substantial house on the corner of Hill Street and Strangways Terrace in North Adelaide called *Younghusbands* as a suitable site for the hospital.¹⁹ The *South Australian Advertiser* announced that “fifty or sixty influential ladies,” met at *Younghusbands* to organise a large International Fair to be held in the Town Hall. They planned for a display of goods from other countries and the best lace and china ever seen in Australia. The details of the International Fair demonstrate the lengths women were prepared to go to improve facilities in the colony, and also how they supported enterprise. Mrs Baker and an ecumenical mixture of other “prominent ladies ... [had] a herald, dressed in the most brilliant colours, riding about the City on a fine horse as a means of advertising.”²⁰ The week-long event in the Town Hall was costumed with themed stalls, continental cafes in the Banquet room, a huge, centred Christmas tree for children, numerous musical recitals and scenery of an international flavour. The experience was designed to usurp the predictable fundraising bazaar model. Substantial entrance sales – 3000 fees sold on the first night – sales of wares, and repeated vice-regal patronage throughout the duration all contributed to the International Fair’s success. The event raised over £900 for the hospital.²¹ Although the first two iterations were covertly advertised as fundraising for a convalescent home in the Adelaide Hills, the organisers were more upfront in later reiterations which they were able to conduct repeatedly in the Adelaide Town Hall with a reduction of rent from the Corporation of Adelaide.²² The International Fair clearly hammers home the spirit of enterprise and self-help at the time, as well as the willingness of women to work together for the advancement of the colony.

So what forced the Community of the Third Order of St. Dominic to sever their

19 It is suggested that the Manager of the Bank of New South Wales, Aloysius MacDonald also contributed £1000 to the mortgage but this seems incongruous with his arrival in Adelaide in 1886.

20 “Adelaide News,” *Northern Argus*, 16 October 1883, 2.

21 *South Australian Advertiser*, 25 September 1883, 3.

22 “Great International Fair,” *Adelaide Observer*, 20 October 1883, 7. See also “Finance Committee’s Report,” *The South Australian Advertiser*, 29 June 1886, 3. *It is unclear why the event was advertised in the press as a fundraiser for a convalescent home in the Adelaide hills. This was brought to light by a letter to the editor during the advertisement leading up to the event.

engagement with the hospital? Why did they commercialise their needlework and creative skills when their financial security had been so assured by the Bakers?

Only the first International Fair benefitted the Community for almost immediately after arriving in Adelaide, it became apparent that they could not administer nursing in the new general hospital. This was because it was for both female and male patients and although a general hospital was taken for granted in the colony of South Australia, and indeed in Ireland where they had sought their fortnight of preparatory work experience, nursing male patients was not considered suitable for English women of their vocation.²³ Their request for guidance from the Bishop of Birmingham, Bishop Ullathorne (1806–1889) confirmed their misgivings.²⁴ The advice meant that they were unable to follow through on their agreed responsibilities and they found themselves in the unenviable position of having to forfeit the promised annual stipend of £400.00. In an act of conciliation, the Community agreed to stay in the colony in an administrative capacity for one year until other arrangements could be found. In the meantime, they needed to find alternative accommodation and generate an income.

A Creative Path to Independence

From this time forward, it is clear that the Dominican Community showed the same spirit of endeavour as the prominent ladies of Adelaide who had organised the International Fair. After all, as Sister Jillian Havey of St. Dominic's Priory points out, the founding Community were women who had come to Adelaide of their own free will, women who sought an alternative to the expected path of marriage and children.²⁵ For example, prior to arriving in South Australia to lead a new venture, Mother Rose Columba Adams had long demonstrated an independent character. Like Mrs Baker and her daughter Bessie, young Sophie Adams was also born into a wealthy protestant family. In Gloucestershire, Sophie was noted for her love of dogs, horses and spirited riding.²⁶ Against her father's wishes, she was received into the Catholic church and joined the Dominican Order. Within the Order, she gained specialised ecclesiastical needlework skills and importantly for her future in Adelaide and the establishment of the atelier and school, she also learnt the

23 Margaret Press, RSJ, *Three Women of Faith*, 75–77.

24 Bishop Ullathorne was the brother of one of the founding Community, Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne.

25 Sister Jillian Havey, St Dominic's Priory, Interviewed 28 September 2020.

26 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir of Mother Mary Rose Columba Adams, O.P.: First Prioress St Dominic's Convent and Foundress of the Perpetual Adoration at North Adelaide*, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1895, 28.

administrative skills to support a commercial model.²⁷

Her potential for administration was observed early when she entered the Convent of St. Dominic's at Stone in Staffordshire. Very quickly, in 1860 she became Sister Vicaress at the convent of Stoke-on-Trent and this appointment was followed by Sub-Prioress at Clifton. Three years later in 1866, she was Sister and then Mother Vicaress at St. Mary's Church, Plymouth. During this placement, she participated in the site management of a new chapel where "every detail of the plans...and execution [of the new church] was discussed with her."²⁸ She also took an active part in the erection of a new convent at Plymouth. She was not daunted by administering large projects and this experience must have bolstered her resolve in Adelaide.

When it became necessary, Mother Rose Columba Adams was able to draw upon her embroidery, painting, terra-cotta decoration and illumination skills. The commercialisation of these skills would have been made clear during her time as Vicaress of a small Dominican Community in Stoke-upon-Trent. The populace she served was almost entirely made up of pottery workers from Minton, Copeland and the rest of the twelve potteries in operation.²⁹ The ecclesiastical Community worked closely with the pottery workers and some of the women continued their involvement with her when she conducted a drawing class for girls working at the Watcombe Terra-Cotta works after she later moved to Plymouth. In 1873, the Sisters of the Community at St. Mary's began to do freehand [drawing and painting] for the Watcombe Terra-Cotta works. Initially, the manager of the works had suggested that the orphans under the care of the Dominican Sisters render the painting but it soon became clear to him that the Sisters' own talents could be harnessed. These painting skills proved advantageous in the first year in Adelaide when Mother Rose Columba Adams and the Sisters painted terra-cotta, one of a suite of skills they utilised to generate an income.³⁰

Prior to leaving England, there was one particular Sister with whom Mother Rose Columba Adams had worked in close creative collaboration. In 1880, she had designed and painted some of the miniatures of an Illuminated Address for

27 Elizabeth Wardle was a pupil at Stone Convent at a similar time to Mother Rose Columba Adams. She went on to establish the Leek School of Embroidery and the Embroidery Society with her husband Thomas. Elizabeth's own speciality was figurative work which is the same Mother Rose Columba Adams; this is an avenue for future research. www.wardleheritage.org.uk accessed 28 January 2022.

28 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 60.

29 *The Staffordshire Pottery Directory*, London: W. Kent & Co, 1868, 93.

30 "Bazaar at the Institute Hall," *Evening Journal*, 30 December 1884, 3.

the Bishop of Plymouth.³¹ The rest of the painting and illumination was completed by Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne who would later join her in the quest to build a new Community in North Adelaide. Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne was a skilled painter and embroiderer. She too painted terra-cotta at the Watcombe Terra-Cotta works. She also illuminated an address containing several miniatures for the Jubilee of the Bishop of Plymouth and in Australia, Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne was awarded a gold medal for her illumination of a Tennyson poem entered in the Women's Work Exhibition in Adelaide, 1907.³² She went on to win first prize in the same section of the national version, the First Exhibition of Women's Work in Melbourne.³³ Clearly, both Mother Rose Columba Adams and Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne arrived in Adelaide with the creative skills to begin financially securing the future of their Community when it became unexpectedly necessary.

In Adelaide, their artistic skills were in demand straight away and because they no longer had a stipend of £400.00 to support them, they pro-actively sought out remunerative work. Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne wrote from South Australia that the Community had been asked to form "a class among the ladies of the place, for sewing, or rather embroidery and illuminating."³⁴ It is significant that she differentiates domestic sewing from embroidery as a more artisan skill, one in keeping with the Arts & Crafts Movement of the time; by separating embroidery from sewing, she signalled a level of skill different from mending and other more pragmatic needlework chores. Mother Rose Columba Adams's biographer and confidant, Reverend W.R. Brownlow (1830-1901) noted how quickly the Community realised their potential in the moment of necessity by commenting that "the Sisters were highly accomplished ladies...Their artistic powers in illuminating, and their skill in embroidery, might also be turned to account in making Church Vestments. By degrees, orders came in and they collected around a little band of pupils."³⁵

Like any start-up business, the Community had to work hard. In October of their first year, Mother Rose Columba Adams wrote home to describe the task of decorating a wooden tabernacle for a school chapel. As well as importing and decorating terra-

31 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 60.

32 "Women's Work Exhibition," *The Advertiser*, 21 August 1907, 6.

33 "Women's Work Exhibition: Prizes awarded to South Australians," *Evening Journal*, 30 November 1907, 7.

34 Right. Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 243.

35 Right. Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir of Mother Mary Rose Columba Adams, O.P: First Prioress St Dominic's Convent and Foundress of the Perpetual Adoration at North Adelaide*, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1895, 243.

cotta for sale, they took on commissions for embroidered ecclesiastical vestments.³⁶ In a November letter, Mother Rose Columba Adams wrote that she had worked “hard all day on the vestments,” while another Sister painted “Christmas Cards, for which there is a great demand, and as we get 3s [shillings] each for them, they are worth doing.”³⁷ The Community’s financial situation was even more urgent after they moved out of their original lodgings in the basement of the hospital. It meant they had to create an income towards the unexpected rent of £200.00 per annum for alternative accommodation. Their creative labour brought them success and they received the highest praise in the press such as the antimacassar pair of bannerette fire-screens they embroidered described as ‘the most artistic samples of fancy work,’ at a Bazaar in the Town Hall opened by the Governor in 1884.³⁸ However, hard work alone does not always bring remuneration.

Mother Rose Columba Adams Design Style: Illuminations and Embroidery

It is clear that the noted success of the Community’s endeavours from this point were underpinned by the clever design skills of Mother Rose Columba Adams. The historian, Brian Andrews has thoroughly researched her role in the design of all the initial architectural drawing plans for the Church and Convent at St Dominic’s Priory in North Adelaide which the “architect put into a workable form.”³⁹ However, her embroidery and illumination designs have remained overlooked.

A close examination of Mother Adams’ designs for illumination reveals how her particular design style meshed with that of her designs for ecclesiastical Art Needlework to create a recognisable character in the illumination and embroidery commissions in Adelaide. For example, in 1885, she designed an illumination for the Hibernian Society with Irish emblems for the Cardinal. In 1887, she designed an illuminated address for the Catholic Young Men’s Society. The same year, one of the Sisters wrote of a much more remarkable commission. A deputation representing “Women of South Australia,” commissioned another illuminated address to Queen Victoria. Mother Rose Columba Adams’ design integrated views of Balmoral and Windsor with the Adelaide coat of arms, the Town Hall, a kangaroo and the

36 “The Anniversary Holiday: Commemoration Day at Glenelg,” *Evening Journal*, 30 December 1884, 3.

37 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 248, 326. See also letter from a Sister 10 November 1890 reprinted in Stephanie Burley & Katherine Teague, *Chapel, Cloister and Classroom: Reflections on the Dominican Sisters at North Adelaide*, Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1993, 31.

38 *Express and Telegraph*, 15 October 1884, 6.

39 Brian Andrews. *Gothic in South Australian Churches*, Adelaide: The Flinders University of South Australia, 1984, 37.

Adelaide Jubilee Exhibition. A feature-medallion contained a symbol of Britannia interlocked with an Aboriginal person.⁴⁰ The address was shown at the Adelaide Exhibition for two weeks before being forwarded to Queen Victoria at Balmoral.⁴¹ In a third commission of that year, Wiggs & Co also bound another illuminated address executed by the Dominican nuns of North Adelaide for Pope Leo XIII. The address depicted medieval designs and figures of St. Peter and St. Paul. Each initial letter featured an emblem of the office of Leo XIII.⁴² Other miniature scenes of religious devotion adorned the address: the Rosary to St. Dominic, Jesus and Mary, St. Joachim, St. Thomas, Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis and the Last Supper. Like the Address for the Queen, it too was displayed for the general public's appreciation and demonstrated the Community's artistic talents. These exhibitions of their illuminated addresses marketed their commercialised creative skills to a wider audience. Both the illuminations and embroideries employ portraiture and a similar colour palette. A number of extant embroidered objects are held in the St. Dominic's Priory Museum. By far the most spectacular is that which has been previously referred to as the Lundberry Cope.⁴³

Figure 1. shows the St. Dominic's Priory Cope designed by Mother Rose Columba Adams and worked by Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne and others in 1889. The object appears in the Opus Anglicanum style Mother Rose Columba Adams learnt at Stone Convent, an approach which included figurative work.⁴⁴ Considered as a part of Mother Rose Columba Adams' entire creative oeuvre, a close analysis reveals the same design style of decoratively bordered miniature portraiture

40 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 287.

41 "Address to the Queen from the Women of South Australia," *Evening Journal*, 21 June 1887, 4. Despite considerable effort to locate this object and a request for vice-regal support, this important South Australian object has not been located in the Royal Collection Trust, the National Archives, UK, Birmingham (colonial) Archives, nor any archival deposit closer to home. A second reply from the Royal Collection Trust on the 7 January 2020 stated that it had probably not survived the transport of archives over the years and been lost with the passage of time.

42 "Address to the Pope," *South Australian Register*, 21 November 1887, 4.

43 The Community presented the Cope to Mother Lundberry at a later stage.

44 Opus Anglicanum style is characterised by richly coloured embroidered threads. It is frequently figurative and the forms are modelled, often with expression. According to Lanto Synge, *The Art of Needlework*, the highpoint of Opus Anglicanum was between 1275 and 1350. Figurative work of this nature has been associated with Elizabeth Wardle (1834–1902), another alumnus of Stone Convent who went on to found the Leek Embroidery Society. Elizabeth was known for her skill in embroidering flesh tones. Elizabeth's brother worked for Morris & Co and Elizabeth's husband Thomas taught William Morris to dye silk using natural ingredients. Thomas also advised the South Australian government on a fledgling silk industry.

and landscapes seen in the illuminated addresses. The coloured silk threads in gold, silver, red and blue also allude to illumination. The body of the ecclesiastical cope is a semi-circle of pale magnolia coloured silk-jacquard which when placed around the shoulders forms a cloak open at the front. It is fastened with a cameo morse nestling in a frame of Art Needlework embroidered flowers. The morse provides a minor distraction to the intricate figurative embroidered length along the semi-circle dissection. This part of a cope is called an orphrey, an ecclesiastical vestment term referring to a long decorative stole appearing down the front sides of the cope when it is draped around the shoulders. The orphrey of St Dominic's Priory Cope is the most striking part of the



Figure 1. *St. Dominic's Priory Cope*

Mother Rose Columba Adams (designer) and Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne (embroiderer). St. Dominic's Priory Cope, 1889, silk embroidery on silk jacquard, St. Dominic's Priory Museum, North Adelaide.

embellishment. It is entirely embroidered although the viewer would be forgiven for initially conceiving a painted surface, such is the skill of the execution.

St. Dominic's Priory Cope features eight portraits of Saints dear to the Third Order of Dominicans. It is a communion of Saints not dissimilar to that described in the illuminated address she executed for Pope Leo XIII. Each Saint has their name embroidered below and their own heraldic shield. The Saints stand within a range of articulated backgrounds such as landscapes of wooded areas, floral arrangements or towns; two are placed in interior scenes of checked-tiled floors larger at the front and smaller towards the background to create perspective and these are a visual link with Mother Rose Columba Adams and Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne's

Details of Figure 1. *Orphrey of St. Dominic's Priory Cope*



former work with the people of Stoke-on-Trent. Each of these eight portraits of miniature delight are surrounded by an intricate border. The viewer is struck by the complexity of the design as a whole, and the delicacy of the execution, especially the tonal application of multiple colours to successfully form the figures in silk thread. A small panel joins the eight portraits at the base of the neck. In reference to the dog often depicted with St. Dominic, a little embroidered dog sits faithfully below a crown supporting a banner with the Latin word for truth – ‘veritas’. All of these portraits, texts and decorative borders could be easily transferable to the medium of illumination. The colonial South Australian viewer must have been equally as arrested by the extraordinary cope as we are today.

The success the Community achieved in these early years of finding remuneration was predicated on a number of factors. Firstly, the Community came prepared to pursue their illumination and embroidery labour. They brought with them two large leather-bound texts seen below in Figure 2. to support their skill development: *The Art of Illumination as practised from Earliest Times*, and *Art Needlework: A Complete Manual of Embroidery in Silks and Crewels*.⁴⁵ Although they probably did not expect to utilise these skills to a commercial end, they were prepared to contribute to either the adornment of their own establishment and/or that of others. Secondly, Mother Rose Columba Adams’s unique design style was attractive and marketable, not least for its figurative narrative and bright colouring. Her work was in demand. Thirdly, she had administrative experience of fledgling communities. Although the Community had the option of paid passage home, they chose to stay and be steered towards an unknown future of their own making. Finally, the Community led by Mother Rose Columba Adams had a willingness to labour. In effect, they harnessed that around, and within them, to create their independence. But creative endeavour alone does not often bring financial security and so they utilised and in fact leveraged their needlework skills to launch another commercial opportunity.

45 St Dominic’s Priory Museum: Henry Shaw, F.S.A. *The Art of Illumination As Practised During the Middle Ages*, London: Bell and Daldy, York Street, Covent Garden, 1870., and *Art Needlework: A Complete Manual of Embroidery in Silks and Crewels, with full instructions as to Stitches, Materials, and Implements containing also a large number of original designs and a Handsome Coloured Design for Crewel Work*, London: Ward, Lock, and Co, 1882. A second text on illumination is also in the collection: W.R.Tymms, *Art of Illumination as practised from The Earliest Times*, London: Day and Son, Lithographers to the Queen, 1866.

Needlework and Teaching

Mother Rose Columba Adams and the Sisters also brought teaching experience to the colony and this provided the Community with a more substantial and sustainable income. At Stone, the Prioress had taught in the Girls Poor School and then in the Middle Pension School. Both positions would have honed her organisational and leadership skills, qualities necessary to teaching. Later as the Mother Vicareess at St Mary's, Plymouth, she initiated an orphanage and a young ladies school on the site. By the time she began a school for young ladies in North Adelaide, she'd already had experience in both teaching and administering in preliminary conditions where her own enterprise and administrative skills were required (as opposed to working in long established institutions). In what can only be described as an aggressive marketing campaign, for two months the Foundress repeatedly advertised for business in the Adelaide newspapers offering instruction in needlework and painting, and other subjects.

*The Dominican Nuns (just arrived from England) have OPENED a SELECT DAY SCHOOL at PARK VIEW HOUSE STRANGWAYS-TERRACE. Instruction is given in English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Painting, Needlework etc etc. For terms apply the Mother Prioress, Park View House, Strangways-terrace, North Adelaide.*⁴⁶

The Select School offered a curriculum of accomplishments that would afford the Community a more secure income. It also enabled a wider audience beyond the Catholic community to benefit from the Community's needlework instruction.

On the 5 January 1884, Mother Rose Columba Adams wrote – "Tomorrow we begin our 'Advanced School,' to pay the rent and to benefit our neighbours."⁴⁷ This comment speaks to her priorities at the time.

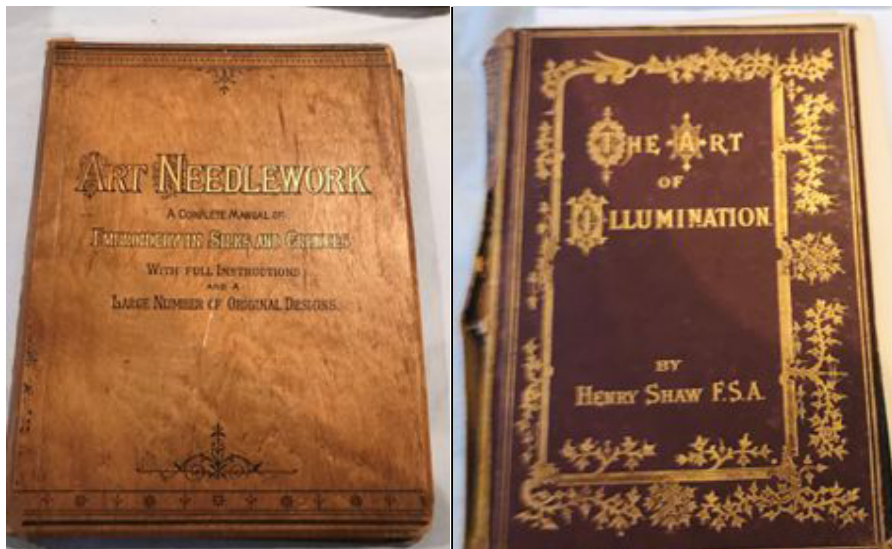
On the other hand, the main priority of the mothers of the daughters of neighbours she hoped to attract, would have been the essential Victorian accomplishment of needlework, not least because the Community had already been noted for the quality of their commissioned embroideries. The other subjects listed included five languages, music and painting but needlework would have been the Communities brand because from the very beginning, the Community's skills had been in demand.⁴⁸

46 *South Australian Register*, 15 December 1883, 1.

47 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 256.

48 "Education," *Evening Journal*, 10 December 1883, 1.

Figure 2.



St Dominic's Priory Museum.

Art Needlework. A Complete Manual of Embroidery in Silks and Crewels, with full instructions as to Stitches, Materials, and Implements containing also a large number of original designs and a Handsome Coloured Design for Crewel Work, London: Ward, Lock, and Co, 1882.

St. Dominic's Priory Museum.

Henry Shaw. The Art of Illumination, London: Bell and Daldy, 1870.

During the first few years of their school, the needlework of the school's students received recognition in the press. For example, one of their 15 year-old pupils "excited general admiration," for embroidered plush on a suite of drawing room furniture and a mantel drape.⁴⁹ In this light, it can be seen that needlework was the springboard for the wider work of the school which would go on to secure a more sustainable and enduring financial independence.

The Dominicans special design style was still demonstrated by their pupils even when the St. Dominic's Priory curriculum of accomplishments developed into an academic programme. Historians Stephanie Burley and Katherine Teague analysed

⁴⁹ "The Gypsy Encampment," *Evening Journal*, 11 November 1885, 2.

a student examination booklet from 1887. They found evidence of subject instruction in Greek, Roman, Medieval and Ancient History, Literature Studies, Grammar, Latin, Chemistry, Botany and Astronomy.⁵⁰ As Burley and Teague noted, despite no formal training, the Sisters were providing an advanced education. Closer analysis of the extant examination booklet of former student 'Lila Higgins' demonstrates that the Sisters were also teaching the same integrated design skills that they employed for illumination and ecclesiastical Art Needlework. Well-executed, hand-drawn miniature illustrations adorn the student booklet. Gothic headings and a centralised heraldic shield embellish it. These are the same motifs and style used in the St. Dominic's cope and illuminated address for Queen Victoria commissioned by 'Women of South Australia'. Although the curriculum broadened to include both a technical and university pathway, needlework remained embedded. For example, by 1905, St. Dominic's Priory Boarding and Day School advertised that they were also teaching book-keeping, shorthand and type-writing. The other academic subjects were not reiterated but "plain and fancy needlework," received a special mention, as was their ability to prepare students for University Examinations.⁵¹

What began as a commercial venture underscored by their embroidery and design skills, blossomed into a large educational facility however it was still operated in conjunction with a needlework and embroidery workroom business and this created considerable pressure on the Community. Added to this, the nuns were not only administering and teaching the Advanced School, they also established a day school for poorer children in North Adelaide called St. Catherine's. The schools provided the Dominican Community with independent means which ultimately, commissions for ecclesiastical needlework, sewing and illumination could not, yet they still took on extra commissions and developed their artistic business side-line. Mother Rose Columba Adams wrote about the strains of juggling competing responsibilities when she noted that they needed another house in order to keep the school because she felt that the School was their "only way of doing good, and almost our only way of getting a living." She added that "a little extra work comes in, which we are glad to get, as it brings us a few pounds; but it has to be done under difficulties." An example of this was the commission for an illuminated address for the Hibernian Society mentioned previously which Sister Francis Philomena

50 1887 Examination booklet of Lila Higgins, Stephanie Burley and Katherine Teague. *Chapel, Cloister & Classroom*, Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1993, 15–18.

51 "St. Dominic's Priory North Adelaide: Boarding and Day School," *Southern Cross*, 21 June 1907, 15.

Ullathorne had to execute after teaching all day.⁵² Despite the difficulties in their workload, the Community continued to operate both the schools and the needlework atelier to materially help their building fund so they could accommodate their expanding educational facilities.

In fact, the Community conducted their Art Needlework atelier for decades. They also took commissions from abroad such as one in 1891 from Honolulu, and another from the Island of Molokai.⁵³ In 1908, the Melbourne press commented on the attire worn by a fashionable bride “made specially in St. Dominic’s Priory, N. Adelaide, by the nuns, and the wedding veil was shown by the Women’s Work Exhibition,” so by this stage, the influence of the Community’s ecclesiastical skills had spilled over into secular spheres.⁵⁴ The accounting ledger held in the St. Dominic’s archives records each purchase of “materials for work,” and each “sale of goods.”⁵⁵ The Sisters produced “vestments, altar linen, art needlework, etc.,” to order.⁵⁶ Their atelier developed into dedicated “workrooms for the making of orders for which [were] being sent from all parts of the State, and even from other States in Australia.”⁵⁷

Conclusion

By 1936, the Dominican Community of North Adelaide had effectively positioned their commercial Art Needlework venture to the point where they were receiving commissions of both a secular and ecclesiastical nature. Sixty-three years after the *Special Loan Exhibition* at South Kensington in 1873, the St. Dominic’s Priory atelier continued to demonstrate the fruition of social change for women seeking to make an acceptable, commercial income. Although the Community is best known today for its St. Dominic’s Priory school and notable Gothic architecture of its Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Mother Rose Columba Adams, Sister Francis Philomena Ullathorne and the other members of the Community played an important role in transitioning ecclesiastical embroidery to a commercial model of Art Needlework

52 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 261.

53 Right.Rev. W.R.Brownlow, D.D. *Memoir*, 337.

54 “Mr H.L. Stevens to Miss.V. Levy,” *Punch*, 23 April 1908, 27.

55 For example, in the 2nd quarter of 1914, £12.4.7 was expended on “materials for work” and the Community recorded £37.12.1 as income from “Painting & Work.” In that year, the Community consisted of 46 Religious, 2 Novices, 2 Postulants, 22 Boarders and 1 Gardener – 73 in total. Accounting Ledger, St Dominic’s Archives, North Adelaide, 45–46.

56 Brian Andrews. *Gothic in South Australia*, Adelaide: Flinders University, 38.

57 “St Dominic’s Priory: Fruits of the Contemplative and Active Life,” *The Southern Cross*, 13 November 1936, 50.

in South Australia. By the centenary of South Australia's colonisation, they had taught several generations to embroider, including the daughters of Protestant North Adelaide families. Their high-quality products were lauded in the press and set an exemplary standard for other needleworkers. What started as instruction in needlework, illumination, music, painting and languages, manifested into an academic curriculum leading to university entrance. Moreover, they provided women of the wider community with a model of commercialising existing skills.

In summary, the pragmatism of the original Community of St. Dominic's exemplified the environment of self-help in colonial South Australia. Their long-neglected atelier was a sweet spot between beauty for cash and cash for beauty. By leveraging their existing skills, and navigating the duality of commercial realities and ecclesiastical responsibilities, the founding Community established an environment where generations of young women at St. Dominic's Priory have begun their own educational path towards wisdom, knowledge and understanding. In essence, the needles of the Dominican Sisters of North Adelaide pulled the threads of future empowerment.

MARIST BROTHERS IN AUSTRALIA 1872–2022

John Luttrell*

In the courtyard of St Patrick's Church, Sydney, is a bronze bust of a French Marist Brother, Br Ludovic Laboureyras. This was commissioned by St Patrick's parish and unveiled on 8 April 2022. Ludovic was the leader of four Marist Brothers who arrived in Sydney on 21 February 1872 and began the first Marist Brothers' school in Australia on this site on 8 April 1872. The Marist Brothers then were an expanding religious congregation, founded in France in the early 19th century by Father Marcellin Champagnat. After 1872 more Brothers came to Australia from Europe and young local men joined the congregation in Sydney. Within 30 years there were communities of Marist Brothers in most states of Australia and in neighbouring islands of the south Pacific – a huge region which the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide labelled as 'Oceania'.



French Marist Brother, Br Ludovic Laboureyras 1845–1924

In 2022 the Marist Brothers and their colleagues and friends are commemorating 150 years of their educational mission in Australia. One event has been the publication of a new history, *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, a joint effort of four authors, one being myself. When our President, John Carmody, became aware of the sesquicentenary and the forthcoming book he invited me to speak to you today.

You may have come to this talk with various impressions and questions. Many of you would have been educated by nuns, priests or brothers – I would guess a majority here. In my case it was seven years with the Josephite Sisters and five years with the Marist Brothers. You would have personal memories of your own

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schooling, perhaps nostalgia. Or mixed feelings. At the same time you would be aware of the changes that have occurred in religious orders and in schools in your own lifetime. One of the four authors of the history, Br Julian Casey, reflected on the changes in his lifetime:

[In the 1950s] brothers identified themselves with establishing Catholic schools, operating schools and teaching in them... They lived in small, dispersed communities and found an easy identity in group belonging and in conforming to behaviour patterns which were often a part of a somewhat closed sub-culture.

But [60 years later] ... brothers were now living out their vows and consecration in a totally different sub-culture. Their communities had declined from focused, hard-working and cohesive religious communities to scattered groups of brothers with an average age of 77. Although most were active in some ministry, only a few had direct participation in the schools.

He then asks: How did these changes come about in my life-time?

Julian's question could apply to most religious congregations in Australia and in what we loosely term the western world. So, a history of the Marist Brothers in Australia can be something of a case study of the fortunes of religious congregations in Australia and beyond. It also has to be situated within the context of changes in society and the Church over 150 years.

You also may be wondering how such changes have occurred, and about the future of religious congregations in Australia. Bearing in mind such questions and impressions and the broader context of social and religious change I will now look at the evolving story of the Marist Brothers in Australia since 1872.

Beginnings in Australia

That first community of brothers – a French Director, two Irishmen and a Scot – were missionaries sent by their Superior General to start a Marist school in Sydney.

Why at St Patrick's parish? The request for Marist Brothers had begun with the Parish



Early St Patrick's School in Harrington Street Sydney. The school is the building with the arched windows

Priest at St Patrick's, Archdeacon John McEncroe. McEncroe died in 1868 and the parish was then entrusted to the Marist Fathers, a religious order closely related to the brothers' congregation. It was logical for the brothers then to start in a Marist Fathers' parish.

There were already some individual Marist Brothers in Oceania before 1872, but they had come as assistants to the Marist Fathers in their various missions in Oceania. One of them, Br Marie-Nizier Delorme was a catechist with Fr Peter Chanel SM at Futuna, when Peter was killed there. The four brothers at St Patrick's were the first to arrive in Oceania as a separate community of brothers.

The beginnings in The Rocks were difficult – the area was Irish working class, the boys had various schooling backgrounds. Still, about 200 enrolled in April and eventually settled into school routines. The brothers themselves had to win acceptance from the families and clergy, including the new coadjutor archbishop, Roger Bede Vaughan. Ludovic seems to have been an enterprising leader who gained the support of the parish. More brothers came from Europe, and in 1875 the Superiors agreed to open two more schools – at St Benedict's Broadway and at Parramatta.

From the point of view of Marist Superiors in France, the Sydney venture was probably somewhat experimental – not part of any grand plan for expansion in Australia. Sydney was just one town in the distant Pacific. They referred to this broad region as Oceania, where they were also answering calls for brothers from other places - New Zealand, New Caledonia, Samoa and Fiji. The small community at The Rocks in 1872 embodied just one of those responses.

With requests for schools in Oceania increasing, the Superior General in 1876 sent an Irish brother, John Dullea, to Sydney as overall leader of the Marist Brothers in the region – he had the informal title of 'Provincial of Oceania' and they quickly commissioned him to begin a school in Wellington, New Zealand. Over the next 30 years further schools were opened in Australia, New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji at the request of local churches. John Dullea was from Cork in Ireland. Energetic, decisive, sometimes severe, and politically astute, he was a contrasting personality to the more flamboyant and sociable Ludovic. John would lead the Australian mission for most years until 1900. He could well have a bronze bust alongside that of Ludovic.

How were they able to staff this growing number of schools? Brothers were sent from Europe – mostly French and Irish. But the significant factor was that Australian and New Zealand youth were prepared to join the congregation. The

Superiors had asked Br Ludovic to look for local recruits. In 1873, a year after the brothers' arrival, two young Australian men applied to join Ludovic's community at St Patrick's and within a year he had a formal novitiate set up there. Soon there were annual groups of novices undertaking about two years of formation and a separate novitiate building at Hunters Hill. By 1900 there were 163 professed brothers in Oceania, still with ultimate leadership in France but now with a promising majority of Australian and New Zealand members.

Expansion and consolidation 1900–70

As the number of brothers grew in Oceania there was a need for structures and organisation. In its first 80 years from 1817 the Marist Brothers' congregation had been centrally controlled by the Superior General in France. John Dullea, although called 'Provincial of Oceania', was really just his delegate. However, in 1903 the first Constitutions of the Marist Brothers were approved by the Vatican and these provided for the creation of official provinces, each under a Provincial with more local authority and autonomy. The region of Oceania now became the official Province of Australia. Its first Provincial was an Australian, Br Stanislaus Healy. Born in Maitland and christened Richard, he had been one of Ludovic's first novices. Cultured and artistic, Stanislaus would also



Br Stanislaus Healy, Provincial of Australia 1903–1906

have terms as master of novices and headmaster of schools up to his death in 1917.

For brothers in the new Commonwealth of Australia, there was a sense of 'coming of age' within the Institute. Their numbers kept increasing and by 1916 they had 210 brothers in 38 communities spread across four states of Australia and in Oceania (particularly New Zealand). With this increase, the Oceania region was split in 1917 to form the separate Province of New Zealand. Thereafter, the Province of Australia was restricted to the geographical area of Australia. Leaders would no longer have to deal with the great distances and the varying educational systems of all the islands of Oceania.



Marist Brothers' communities in the Province of Australia 1918

The growth of the first Province of Australia entailed some potentially problematic consequences. The brothers were much in demand, since parishes could not afford lay teachers in an era of no government funding. Lay teachers were only employed in their schools if no brothers were available. These were almost universally male and would never be in leadership. A second consequence of the demand was that teacher training for brothers was minimal until the 1930s when young brothers were given a year of training, but even then some were withdrawn to fill gaps in schools. As religious, the brothers were held in high prestige in the strongly hierarchical Church – Archbishop Kelly in Sydney termed them ‘God-given teachers’.

For the first hundred years in Australia, most brothers would have a uniform life, beginning in a Marist juniorate and novitiate and then teaching in a Marist school for their whole working life. To take one example, William Reedy from Camden became a novice under Br Ludovic and would spend most his 70 years as a brother teaching primary classes, especially at Kogarah and Maitland. Their lifestyle was simple, and at times materially inadequate. With minimal government support for their schools, they depended on the moral and financial support of the Catholic community until about 1970. The Catholic community was united in its prizing of Catholic schooling and willing to make sacrifices to support the Marist



A gathering of Marist Brothers in the 1940s at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill

Brothers and their schools. By 1947 there were about 340 brothers running schools in five states. Again, the Province of Australia was divided and replaced by the two Provinces of Melbourne and Sydney. The Province of Melbourne contained brothers' communities in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and south-western NSW. The Province of Sydney covered the rest of NSW and Queensland. Each Province had its own Provincial and would develop its own sense of identity. Each grew in numbers of brothers and of schools, despite challenges of finance. They would continue as separate Provinces until 2012.

Headwinds and setbacks

Up to the 1960s there was a sense of progress, confidence and achievement for the Marist Brothers in Australia. Two developments of the 1960s were important in shaking this positivity. One was the theological revolution in the Church, most strongly driven by the Second Vatican Council, which emphasised the sense of the Church as a community and the dignity and mission of all Catholics. A second factor was the welcome return of government funding to private schools, after several decades of struggle. Both developments were blessings, but paradoxically they were also challenges for Marist Brothers and their sense of identity. More lay teachers could be afforded and the brothers now welcomed women to their staffs. In Vatican II thinking, lay teachers also had a mission as Christian educators. So, were brothers needed for Catholic schools? Could one of 'Christ's lay faithful' be a principal in a Marist school?

The new context affected recruitment to the Institute. Many brothers decided to leave the congregation and the number of recruits in Australia has declined to a trickle in recent times. The number of professed brothers in Australia dropped

from over 600 in 1970 to 250 brothers in 2011 and to 173 Australian brothers in 2021, with an average age in the seventies. Nowadays, few are closely involved with the schools.

To these challenges since the 1960s must be added the more recent revelations of sexual abuse of children by brothers and others in Marist institutions. This



Mixed Brothers and lay staff at Marist Brothers' College Forbes in the 1970s

came to widespread public awareness in the 1990s and culminated in the hearings and report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse of 2013–17. The Commission investigated the period 1950–2010 and its findings in regard to the Marist Brothers were devastating: complaints of abuse to either civil authorities or Marist Brothers' authorities were made concerning a 'weighted' 20 per cent of Brothers ('unweighted' was 14%); Marist leaders, especially in the period 1950–80, had not kept adequate records of complaints and had allowed alleged abusers to remain in positions of access to children.

Underlying much of this was a lack of the understanding of the tragic impact of abuse on the victims. Impact statements offered by victims to the Royal Commission and to the congregation (in redress meetings) have brought home the life-long harm of such abuse.

What have the above findings meant for the congregation and its mission? For most brothers and their lay colleagues there were drip after drip revelations of offenders within their ranks, as individual Brothers were withdrawn from schools, court cases held and some brothers sent to prison. Media attention reinforced the gravity of the situation. The current Provincial Peter Carroll in 2018 reported a spectrum of early feelings amongst the brothers: 'fear about working with children... fear of false allegations;... a profound sense of betrayal and of shame ... they feel they have been collectively branded... They feel caught between the need to be just and compassionate to survivors and complainants, and their relationship with

offenders; they struggle with the notion of forgiveness.’

Learning from and responding to these revelations have been a preoccupation of leaders and brothers for the last 30 years. There has been a variety of responses: redress compensation and support for survivors; official apologies to victims; development of protocols for the safeguarding of minors; regular information and workshops on child safety for the brothers and their colleagues; supervision for brothers who had offended. All of this in collaboration with government and Church developing practices. In 2018 Provincial Peter Carroll mused on these responses:

.... can we heal the harm and hurt; and if so how? There are no glib answers. Only deliberate, positive action will convince those who can be convinced (and I fear there are many who will never be convinced) that a cultural change has taken place... A more significant response is to go back to the very basics of our vocation... to be men of communion, service and prayer; in a word, to be brother.

In our recent *Sub Tuum Praesidium* history, Br Peter Rodney has elaborated on the abuse crisis in Chapter 33, entitled ‘Out of Darkness’. I commend the chapter to your reading.

Transformation

This narrative of the last 50 years has so far portrayed a shrinking, scarred, and aging congregation with a doubtful future. While these negatives are real, it is a simplistic and partial picture. I will now turn to aspects of transformation of the Marist mission in Australia which allow for a much more positive future.

Has the shrinking number of brothers undermined the Marist mission of education? It’s hard to see this in the overall picture of Marist schools and welfare institutions. Marist schools have flourished and professional lay staff gradually replaced the Brothers in teaching and leadership of the schools. The brothers came to accept these changes, hesitantly at first, but then welcoming lay co-responsibility and fostering lay Marist spirituality.

I will now expand on this by pointing to six spheres of activity where the mission of the Marist Brothers in Australia continues to flourish and even expand.

As Marist Brothers became fewer in the schools and lay teachers took responsibility for leadership and teaching, there were questions on whether the schools would retain their Marist connections and identity. In 2002 an association of Marist schools was formed and in 2021 this was legally incorporated as **Marist Schools Australia (MSA Ltd)**.

To date, 56 schools have chosen to affiliate with MSA – 12 owned by the

congregation and the rest governed by diocesan education offices. MSA provides many services to all of these schools particularly in terms of formation of staff, administrative and legal help, and Marist teaching resources. For the 12 Marist-owned schools MSA has direct responsibility in governance, including appointment of senior staff and performance reviews. My impression as an interested observer is that the schools are just as Marist as they ever were. Teachers, parents and 50,000 pupils value having their Marist traditions and identity.

Within schools there long have been programmes for students who wished to go further in their faith and Christian service – youth groups, retreats, immersion experiences. Marist Brothers and lay teachers have facilitated these programmes. This area has now come under the responsibility of **Marist Youth Ministry**, with a lay national coordinator and regional teams in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Another area of Marist ministry which has flourished under lay care is that of social welfare. Since 1896 the Marist Brothers had run St Vincent's Boys' Home at Westmead. This institutional model was abandoned in the 1980s and the brothers arranged for the boys to live in community homes. The congregation in 1994 established a new legal identity, Marist Youth Care, to have responsibility for these boys, many lay-staff and volunteers. In 2016 Marist Youth Care was renamed as **Marist 180** – signifying a goal of turning one's life around. By 2020 Marist180 was supporting about 250 young people in several states. It had a staff of 500, all lay, including a chief executive (Peter Monaghan). Nevertheless, the agency is still a responsibility of the Marist Brothers' Province.

Another development has been the regional outreach of the Australian Province since the 1960s. Australian brothers developed mission schools in Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Pakistan. In the 1990s Br Terrence Heinrich established a boarding/day school in Cambodia for the most needy and disabled young people left by the Pol Pot regime of the 1970s. Two Australian brothers still work there in 2022, although the main administration and care is now in the hands of the local people. Likewise, in Timor Leste there has been a growing Marist involvement in response to the invitation of the Bishop of Baucau in 2000. A teachers' college has been established in association with Australian Catholic University and several classes have since graduated. A Marist school is also nearly completed in a poor rural area, Lautem. Moreover, a number of Timorese have sought to become Marist Brothers and a few have made their first vows.

Supporting these overseas projects has been a fund-raising office in Brisbane called **Australian Marist Solidarity**. It is a registered not for profit company



Young Marist Brothers and novices with Australian Formators in Timor Leste in 2022

recognised by the Australian Government since 2011 and is able to receive tax-deductible donations for specific Marist projects which accord with AusAID guidelines. Its main projects have been those in Cambodia and Timor Leste, but it also supported projects in 16 other countries in the region – such as Myanmar, Fiji and Samoa. Marist school communities in Australia are important sources for donations and immersion experiences in these projects.

The sixth development, the **Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat**, is an overarching one, crucial for maintaining a Marist ethos in schools and other ministries. As mentioned, much of Marist ministry since the 1980s had come to depend on the involvement and support of lay colleagues who were committed to maintaining the values, ethos and charism inherited from Saint Marcellin Champagnat and the early brothers. But how real and permanent was such lay commitment? Would a lay principal and lay staff at schools such as Parramatta Marist High continue to foster this Marist ethos? Were they Marists at heart? Was there a lay Marist vocation?

A nucleus of Marist supporters came to think this way. Nearly all were already very active in Marist schools and welfare work. From around 2011 the brothers and these lay colleagues supported the creation of the Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat. Brothers and lay colleagues were invited to become members of the Association. The uptake was strong, and its vitality is reflected in its current self-description:

The Marist Association of St Marcellin Champagnat is a vital faith community and expression of Church that embraces God's mission with Marian joy, hope, and audacity. We are a Membership base of over 800, including Marist Brothers, lay women and men, and clergy. We draw on both the Marist tradition of Saint Marcellin Champagnat, and imagination, to be game-changers for young people, particularly those most on the peripheries. We foster connectedness and communion among ourselves as an Association, with the Marist spiritual family around the world, and with the wider Church.

It has an elected Council, along with local groups who meet regularly. There have been National Assemblies in 2015, 2018 and 2022. Since this Association was to share responsibility for continuing the Marist mission in Australia, the brothers sought to have it recognised by the Vatican and the Australian government. By 2021 the Marist Association had been incorporated by the Australian government as a limited not for profit company (MASMC Ltd). So the Association is recognised in civil law, but not yet in canon law.

This narrative for the last thirty years has stressed the transformation and broadening of the Marist Brothers' mission through lay involvement and acceptance of responsibility. One could argue that now there is a broader reach than ever. New structures and a new bureaucracy have necessarily followed, and I would again affirm the importance of the new Marist Association for the future. It will have governmental co-responsibility with the brothers through its leadership, but its main potential is as a spiritual association helping to unite and inspire its 900 or so members.

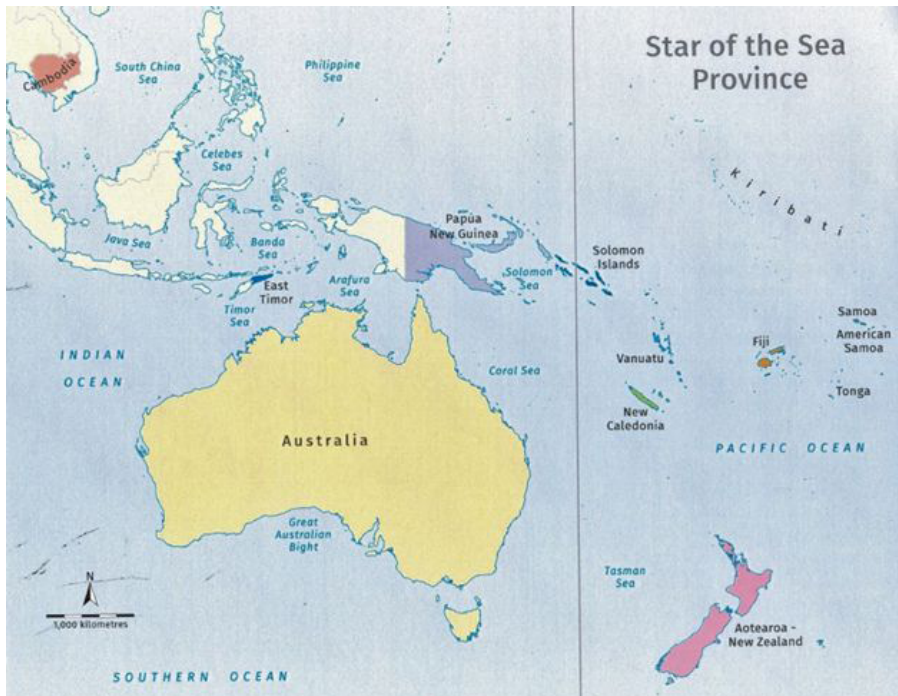
Where did this leave the Marist Brothers of the Schools? For some, the



challenges and changes were difficult to accept; however, most brothers adapted well and found new opportunities for ministry, often well suited to their individual characters. Many were happy to continue a teaching or leadership career in Marist schools. But by the year 2000 we could find Marist Brothers as university lecturers, youth ministers, spiritual directors, prison chaplains, and leaders of solidarity offices. Some were involved outside Australia in Melanesia, Timor Leste, Cambodia and the Philippines. ‘School’ now had a broader and more diverse meaning for Marist Brothers of the Schools. Since 2012 many brothers have joined the Marist Association, seeing it as an important support for the continuation and spread of ministry and the Marist charism.

Back to Oceania

As the number of brothers in Australia declined, there was less need for the two provinces in Australia, with their separate leadership teams in Sydney and Melbourne. In 2012 the Provinces of Sydney and Melbourne were amalgamated to become again the Province of Australia, with the one Provincial based in Sydney.



However, even this arrangement will be short-lived, because neighbouring Marist districts in the Pacific and New Zealand were also having difficulty in finding local leaders and formators for young brothers. The Marist General Council in Rome decided that it would be best to bring the communities and resources of the whole Oceania region into one Province. And so, the short-lived second Province of Australia, inaugurated in 2012, is scheduled to close on 8 December 2022, when the new Province of Star of the Sea will be born. Geographically, this is a full circle return to Marist beginnings in Oceania in the 1870s. Its significance for Marist mission is yet to unfold.

The Marist Brothers are just one of many religious congregations which have developed in Australia since the 1850s. Other congregations will see reflections of their own histories in the Marist story. The histories of all of these congregations have been bound up with and shaped by the broader historical influences that have changed both Australia and the Catholic Church since the 1850s.

The recent history, *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, concludes with a hope for the new Star of the Sea Province:

A future history will tell of Champagnat Marists – lay and brothers – in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Aotearoa–New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Timor-Leste and Cambodia. Star of the Sea is ... an early title for Mary, Mother of Jesus. Under this title Mary was invoked to be protector and guide of seafarers. It is an apt title for communities of Marists connected by kilometres of ocean. In addition, it echoes the name of the sailing ship that in 1872 brought the founding community of brothers to Australia – the *Star of Peace*.¹

¹ Julian Casey, John Luttrell, Peter Rodney and Neville Solomon, *Sub Tuum Praesidium: Marist Brothers in Australia 1872–2022* (Marist Brothers of Australia, Mascot NSW, 2022), 529.

WRITING AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HISTORY – RIVERVIEW: A CASE STUDY

Gerard Windsor*

For Ed Campion

The last, and first, time I gave a paper to the Society was the 6th of June 1976. It was entitled “Riverview’s Origins and Early Style”. The presiding genius of the Society in those days was Monsignor Con Duffy. I reported on the occasion in a letter to my brother Michael, then in PNG. I noted that Con Duffy did not fall asleep – a habit he was fond of. Also that he chuckled a number of times. I put that down to slightly adverse comments made on Riverview and various Jesuits which tickled his fancy, Con being an old boy of, and the then chaplain of, St Joseph’s Hunters Hill. A more orthodox mark of his approval was that he suggested he and I collaborate on a history of St John’s College.

My paper was duly published in the *Journal*.¹ I received a letter dated 21 March 1977 from the great chronicler of Australian Catholic social history. He said, ‘I write immediately to say how much I enjoyed your paper – it whets the appetite for the book’. Regrettably Ed Campion’s appetite was not to be satisfied.

The essence of this story is that in late 1974 I was commissioned to write a history of St Ignatius College, Riverview, with a view to its publication for the school’s centenary in 1980. I wrote it during 1975 and 1976, and handed it in, as stipulated, at the end of 1977. Late in 1978 I was told the manuscript was unacceptable, and publication was refused. Nor, the school having the copyright, was I allowed to seek any form of publication elsewhere.

Father Charles Fraser, old Riverview boy, longtime Classics master at the school and a former teacher of myself as well as an ongoing friend, had mentioned to me about 1972 that a history would have to be written for the centenary. A few years later, remembering this, I volunteered. Charlie was pleased and took my application to the headmaster, Fr Peter Quin. I set out my ideas to Peter Quin, and he wrote to the school’s solicitor, John d’Apice, that ‘[Gerry’s] approach to the subject pleases me very much. He intends to write a history that is neither dull nor lacking a few

¹ Gerard Windsor, ‘Riverview’s origins and early style’, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 5 (2) (1976), 1–18.

* Gerard Windsor is a novelist, literary critic and essayist and author of *The Tempest-Tossed Church*. This talk was given to the ACHS on 15 May 2022.

anecdotal elements ... He is also interested in characters ... I have confidence that Gerry will write the history very well, with humour; he has an excellent style.'

So the work got underway. Peter Quin asked that I show him draft chapters as they were written. I did so. I have no memory of any comments from him at the time, and he soon handed this task over to another member of the Jesuit community, Fr Austin Ryan. 'Because,' said Peter Quin, 'he would be doing this if you weren't'. In 1958 Fr Ryan had been my first Greek teacher. He was a superb linguist, widely learned, and a gentle, kind human being. He was also, as I wrote to my brother Michael at the time, 'bedevilled with this blight of prudence, discretion, never say anything disedifying etc.'

Peter Quin and Austin Ryan were not the only ones who saw something of my approach during the actual writing of the history. I decided in mid 1975 to contribute occasional pieces to the school's weekly newsletter, "Viewpoint", as a way of alerting the school community to my project and providing them with entertaining gobbets unearthed by my research. In retrospect this was unwise. My role should have been detached observation of the school, not participation in its life. I was trailing my coat, and clearly raised alarm bells.

My tactlessness went even further. Stupidly, on 7 April 1976, in the aftermath of the GPS Regatta, I published a letter in "Viewpoint". I opened by pointing out that Riverview's average placing was sixth (out of eight). I quoted lines from songs 'officially allowed for this year's regatta ... 'Our eyes have seen the glory of the Rowing of the Eight /They have rowed down all the crews that tried to set the pace'. I ended up 'Does the school really endorse the values implied here which, I suggest, are literary abortion, religious debasement, triumphalist arrogance and, unfortunately, ill-founded presumption'.

The following week's edition of "Viewpoint" was largely given over to outrage. A letter by V Higgs SJ was titled 'Where's Viewpoint Heading?', and said, 'Lately, VP has become an avenue for publishing letters which can only be described as divisive for the Riverview community.' A parent, the 1st XI, assorted pupils all weighed in. So did a laymaster, JP Castley, with great balance: 'Mr Windsor's letter has provided a great deal of anger, his first six lines invite it and perhaps deserve it. But I don't think his essential care for the values the school lives by has been seen for the fine thing it is and that is what his letter is all about. His pungent comments on the rowing songs are accurate and deserved.' Finally there was one letter that began, 'Might I suggest to the emotive young "spirited" men who at the sight of Mr Windsor's thought-provoking letter went red ... That they reread it and examine the

points proposed ...’ The letter concluded ‘The pursuit of excellence, determination, and school spirit ... are admirable aspects of our school, so long as they do not reach the stage of claiming divine intervention or acting like the Hitler Youth!’ Signed ‘Anthony Fisher (11d)’.

Whatever about the fun value of all this spatting, it could only have alarmed the authorities, my employers.

Austin Ryan, however, was the only one who read the actual manuscript as it was being written. Certainly in retrospect, I believed this task of reading and assessing my work in progress was a cruel imposition on him; it clearly hurt and upset him. He was meticulous in reading it and in making detailed notes for me, and he was courteous in the extreme. But it was immediately very obvious to me that we simply started from radically different premises. His view was that because the work was being produced for a centenary and therefore ‘intended to be part of a joyous and festive occasion’ it should be a work with some such title and flavour as ‘Riverview Achievements in its First Century’.

Austin Ryan’s principle was charity above all. Written models that he suggested convinced me that this absolute principle led to history that was anodyne, colourless and false. My counter principle, I suppose, was “the facts”, so that Austin had to say, ‘I beg you to be less harsh and trenchant in your criticisms though of course you must make them’. He ended his long critique to me with an affection I now find quite moving, ‘So, dear Gerard, while respecting the truth as you try to do, endeavour to be more gentle and understanding.’ He wrote that I ‘resemble[d] the late Father George O’Neill S.J. who had a tendency to caricature what he wrote about and to take some pleasure in showing up rather the defects of his subjects than otherwise’.

One problem was that positives and virtues weren’t always apparent. A Fr Frank Connell, for example, was at Riverview for thirty years as a very loose cannon. Whatever subject he was teaching he spent much of his time in class fulminating against other denominations or, by way of variety, against the Rector and other Jesuits. My mother remembered him, from visits to the school to see her brother Charlie. She said Fr Connell ‘took an awkward shine to me’. Riverview could not get rid of him. The obvious place for his retirement was Sevenhill in the Clare Valley. But his eccentricities, let’s say, had first manifested in Adelaide in 1920, and as a result he was persona non grata in that diocese. I had not yet written up these details of Fr Connell’s hijinks but had foreshadowed them with the line that Fr Connell was ‘above certain rules’. Austin found that phrase unacceptable.

Ideally there should have been a middle way between Austin and myself, but even now I don't see how it could ever have been managed.

I found Austin's historiographical working rules unviable. Personal mannerisms or defects, he believed, should not be mentioned. Letters and diaries, works never intended for publication, should not be used. Pious and affectionate memories should not be tampered with. He wrote 'However true what you say may be and almost certainly is, except here and there ... it should not be presented to the general public in its present form'. His sentiment was remarkably similar to an article in the 1916 school annual, *Our Alma Mater*, an unsigned review of the Jesuit C.C. Martindale's life of Robert Hugh Benson. The anonymous critic complained:

The work is an able one, well written and thorough, but liable, we think, to a criticism directed against *My New Curate* [a 1900 novel by the parish priest of Doneraile, Canon P A Sheehan]. It is, to put it plainly, too great a revelation. There are some things in it that would have been better entrusted to a sympathetic and circumspect Catholic tradition than to the bleak abandonment of the printed page.

In my defence against Austin Ryan's worries I wrote to Peter Quin, their recipient, that I had not passed 'one moral judgment, e.g. That x or y was lazy, selfish, malevolent etc. Nor had I revealed any "very serious defect", moral or whatever, that was not public at the time.'

Nor had I, naive boy that I was. Because, in the course of my research, I came across two documents written by senior Jesuits which I did not refer to in my manuscript. In retrospect I believe my reasoning was that the items were oddities, that is that there was no obvious section or chapter that they fitted into. In other words, if facts seemed to be peripheral, ignore them – a dangerous principle for a historian.

The facts were these. Each Jesuit province publishes an annual *catalogus*. This booklet lists an individual Jesuit's place of residence and his duties there. In 1892 one Irish priest, Fr William Power, was listed at St Aloysius in Sydney, in 1893 at St Patrick's East Melbourne, in 1894 at Riverview, in 1895 at Xavier, in 1896 at Tullabeg in Co. Offally, in 1897 at Clongowes Wood in Co. Kildare. Highly itinerant.

The all-telling clue to this gallop is a series of entries in letterbooks kept by Fr John Ryan, Riverview's Rector in the early 1890s and later the Australian Superior. Ryan was one of the greats. A Limerick man, he had done his studies for the secular priesthood at the Irish College in Rome, came to Australia in 1875 and joined the Society of Jesus in 1879. Ryan kept letterbooks – notebooks in which he summarised

the contents of letters he had sent. They are historiographical gold – in spite of his occasional ploy to throw later readers off the scent. In 1894 he wrote to Fr Patrick Keating, recently of the Riverview staff but then on his way home to Ireland to take up the position of Provincial. Point Five began, “Madame Power - anxious to know if you succeeded in effecting [sic] a reconciliation”. John Ryan then immediately switches horses with a new blind, and writes “Case of Gul Potestas”. Basic Latin tells you this translates as William Power. Ryan, having laid his smoke screen, then goes on in English, “Since I wrote several cases of his intimacy with boys here - I think he should be sent to India or somewhere like that. The consultors all agree he should not remain in Australia.” I’ve yet to come across a more lapidary revelation of the problem of both clerical sexual abuse and of moving men around. And this is 1894.

The second item was in a letter from Fr Patrick Keating, as Provincial in Ireland, to Fr Timothy Kenny, the Superior in Australia. This is also held in the Australian Jesuit Archives.

Dated 31 May 1900 it reads,

I had a very sad letter from Fr Dalton [the founder of both Riverview and St Aloysius] about the Rector of Riverview by the last post. If what he says is true and I fear it is you must put him off at once and send a terna to Fr General for a new Rector. The case is a very urgent one and I fear it will destroy the place. I hope things are not so bad as Fr Dalton seems to think them.

The Rector in question, Fr Luke Murphy, was replaced as Rector in September that year. His whereabouts for the next two years are unrecorded, but in 1903 he was appointed to St Aloysius and stayed there till his death in 1937. The published official history of Riverview doesn’t refer to Fr Keating’s letter but says ‘Riverview is not a suitable place for administration by quiet, bookish men who delight in retiring to their studies, however, and the decision after three years to install Father Gartlan as rector acknowledged the need for dynamism in the rector’s office.’ Well, maybe. No evidence for this interpretation is offered.

But nor did I refer to either of these two documents. Nothing remotely as scandalous as the problem of Fr William Power appeared in my manuscript. Could a school history be written now that didn’t acknowledge such facts? Could sudden mid-term disappearances from the school by headmasters be passed over in silence?

As stipulated in the contract my paid employment at Riverview finished at the end of 1976. In November I went to Rome to look in the Jesuit Archives there, spent

most of 1977 in Ireland and on my return presented the finished manuscript to the school before the end of that year. Not until the middle of November 1978 did Peter Quin contact me. Assorted adventures followed, but I want to concentrate on the nature of the history as written and various principles involved.

In summary, Peter Quin said the book was unacceptable, would not be published, and no discussion would be entered into. I protested, he relented slightly and appointed three members of the Riverview staff to discuss with me the possible salvation of the work. The three included a Jesuit scholastic. This man wrote a list of specific objections, and as he was leaving the school he gave it to one of his colleagues to bring to my notice. The covering letter read,

I have tried to isolate the points of contamination – that is the most appropriate word I can think of to describe Windsor’s systematic damning with faint praise, unduly cynical construction, his technique of undercutting and demolishing by selective comments and suggestions of a diminishing kind. The closer the work gets to his own time at the school the more disaffected and slanted it becomes - almost to the point where it is utterly abject.

Personally, I would be open to negotiation on very few if any of the points I have raised.

May you continue to redeem the time, and this ‘hapless’ history.

In Christ

Jack

In the course of his comments Jack added a few more adjectives – ‘inane, inept, asinine ...’

As might have been predicted the negotiations got nowhere.

For the purposes of this paper, however, I want to concentrate on just one other member of the trio, Errol Lea-Scarlett. Partly because Errol was the most gently constructive of my critics, but above all because he himself wrote the official history when mine was ruled out.

It was and is clear that ideologically Errol and I were poles apart. Let me give two examples. In a 1969 illustrious Riverview old boy Robert Hughes published an article in *The London Magazine*, ‘Flying the Black Mamba: Recollections of Sydney School Days’.² At one point in my manuscript I discussed the horizontal Division system at Riverview where boys were quarantined according to age groups. I footnoted Hughes on this subject, notably his remark that the Division system was ‘designed to eliminate the twin evils of bullying and pederasty’.

² Robert Hughes, *Flying the Black Mamba*, *London Magazine* 9, 8 (Nov 1969), 5–17.

commented that ‘it had some success with the former, absolutely none with the latter’. I went on to say Hughes’s celebrated account was required reading for anyone interested in Hughes, Jesuit education, private schools and purple prose, and that it was as entertaining as it was inaccurate. And I had uncovered little evidence of bullying and none of pederasty. Errol’s comment on my manuscript was ‘Hughes’ “celebrated account” could be “required reading” only for the enemies of Riverview and the Catholic school system. I would consider it improper to draw attention to the existence of the document.’

Secondly I had written of the school’s non-teaching lay employees. Fr Charles Fraser, old boy, classicist, horticulturalist, had told me a story I included about an Italian gardener who lived in a shed on the property and kept a large kerosene drum at his door. He used to unload his urine into this, and in the course of time, with chemical maturity reached, he would sprinkle the liquid round the roses. Errol wrote ‘The story of the urinating gardener illustrates nothing that would not be used simply as an excuse for ridiculing the school. My puritanism cannot accommodate it as publishable material.’

In time Errol was asked to write the official school history.³ When it appeared in 1989, eleven years after this exchange, Errol referred three times to the Hughes essay and in fact described it as a ‘sophisticated article’. I would never have gone nearly that far. But otherwise he remained true to his principles - there was no mention of the urinating gardener and very little about misbehaving boys - with one notable exception; Errol detailed a great deal of running away, a phenomenon I had neglected entirely whereas it was once a significant feature of Riverview boarding life.

In 1984, seven years after I had finished the history, I felt prompted to write an account of the experience. I called it “Writing an Unpublishable Book”. I never tried to publish this essay. In many respects it’s a bitter document. But it records insights into the trouble that I had long forgotten I had ever had. In particular I’ve been struck by one comparison that I made, and I’ll quote something of what I wrote in 1984. In 1978 a history of Xavier College, Riverview’s Melbourne twin, was published.⁴

It contained the judgment that the Jesuits had the choice to be men of the Spirit or men of the Law, and had chosen to be men of the Law. To anyone who possessed even the most cursory acquaintance with the writings of

3 Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Riverview: Aspects of the Story of Saint Ignatius’ College & its Peninsula 1836–1988* (Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1989).

4 Greg Dening, *Xavier: A Centenary Portrait* (Old Xavierians’ Association, Kew, 1978).

St Paul, this represented a most damning judgment. How did the Xavier book get away with it? In the first place it had been commissioned not by the school but by the old boys. Secondly it had been written by Professor Gregory Denning. It is one thing to ban the work of a nonentity, but quite another to put the kybosh on a manuscript by the Professor of History at Melbourne University.

More importantly Denning and myself used different frameworks for our writing of history.

His primary scholarly background in sociology and anthropology is apparent. He is, for example, explicitly interested in the boarding school, and that particular boarding school, as an example of a total institution. With my own background being literature, I tended to focus much more on the individual characters who had been the school. And rather than using sociological models, I was probably influenced by literary myths. Remote Riverview was regarded, even amongst Jesuits, as a world unto itself. So the central myth influencing me, although I believe I was unconscious of it at the time, was that of Paradise and the Fall. This was strongly suggested by the terms in which the earliest masters and boys at the school described themselves. Originally Riverview was one stone cottage, a large, carefully laid out garden, and one hundred and twenty acres of wilderness set on an isolated peninsular. The image that was adverted to and established itself was that of a paradise. Even as late as 1919, at the time of the great pneumonic flu epidemic, the school was still seeing itself as an enclosed bastion against outside contamination.

So I came to write a book about a new start in virgin soil, about high hopes, and enthusiastic innocence. And the early years saw much that was spectacular. A giant like Fr Patrick Keating, an absolute Renaissance gentleman, was on the staff. Some outstanding academic results, (including but not ending with Christopher Brennan) were obtained. An atmosphere of friendliness was cultivated.

But of course the serpent entered in. In this case it first took the form of the depression of the 1890s, of some brutal younger Jesuits, of a retreat from the range of student activity and independence. A fitting symbol of the blighted hopes of those early years was the fate of the first two student luminaries, Brennan and his colleague Stephen Burke. Brennan's sad career is well known. Burke, to the great acclaim of the school, became a priest, earned a doctorate in Rome and was appointed to the staff of Moran's new seminary, St Patrick's College, Manly. Brennan told another story. 'He [Burke] had one lecture at 9 a.m.; in a short time he formed the habit of getting to the Australia before 12. It was then the drunk's boat

home to Manly; friends and the college porter kept it from the Cardinal's ears as long as they could; but at last he was put to parish work, which he was not strong enough to stand: he died shortly before the Cardinal'.

So my history took the form of a chronicle of what I take to be normal human activity; much effort and dedication but always badly flawed; an endless mixture of motives, intentions, ideals and interests; continuous activity which is by no means always progress. That was the nub of the problem with it as a history. My readers and assessors could not countenance such a view of human activity. An enterprise they were engaged in - and they were engaged in it to a man - had to be more 'successful' than I had allowed it to be. They could cope with the odd falter, eccentricity, or even scandal, but the general pattern had to be a rising arc of achievement.

So, to the book as actually written. For this purpose I've found it useful to look at Errol Lea-Scarlett's official history of Riverview, published eleven years later in 1989. It's a fine book, widely and meticulously researched, comprehensive in the extreme, generously illustrated and handsomely produced. To gauge the style and the problems of my work it's helpful to compare elements of Errol's book. For a start his voluminous footnotes reveal that he had access to many more archival documents than were made available to me in 1975. It's clear that in that earlier year a lot of material was either still lying unknown in remote corners of the school, or it was deliberately withheld from me. Errol's sources now included formal Jesuit records such as Acts of the House Consultations, Memorials of Provincial Visitations, the History of the House (a chronicle officially kept in every Jesuit residence), letters to Fr Dalton, Fr Frank Connell's school novel *By the River* long believed to have been destroyed or never even written. I'm glad this material was brought to light, and was preserved.

I should interpolate here that much of the material I'm referring to in this paper has to do with the school's first thirty years. There are two reasons for this. First because the archives for that earlier period were open: when I looked, for example, at the ones in Rome in 1977 they were only open to 1917. Documents had to be sixty years old before they could be examined. Secondly this early period seems to me to have established a particular personality for the school, one that distinguished it from Xavier for example.

To return to the moderns, Errol and myself. It strikes me that Errol and I had different predispositions when it came to appraising individuals. Errol, a conservative man - and of course that judgment is heavily influenced by his 1977 comments on my own work - Errol never strayed from the canon of Riverview

greats. This included above all Fr Tommy Gartlan. Errol's chapter on him is entitled "The Triumph of Tommy Gartlan". Mine is "Fr Tommy Gartlan - the Watershed". Both of us saw Gartlan as decisive, Errol positively, I negatively. Gartlan arrived from Ireland, as a sick man, in 1880 and founded the St Ignatius College Rowing Club. Rowing became his life. He had two periods as the school's Rector from September 1900 to 1912 and from July 1913 to August 1919. In the 1890s he was the Minister, the man in charge of the material welfare and discipline of the school. I wrote about a period in Fr Gartlan's Ministership when the Jesuit General, Fr Luis Martin, wrote to the Irish Provincial in 1893 that 'Fr Minister, distracted by his care of the rowing, is said to be neglecting discipline and domestic matters and to be unsuitable for his office.' The following year, writing to the new Irish Provincial, Patrick Keating, the General was more forceful. 'The boys, not without loss to their studies, and not without complaints from the parents, are too much distracted by their military exercises and their rowing. The Minister is so intent on these exercises and games that he neglects to look after what pertains to his own job.'

Yet Father Gartlan remained both as Minister and as President of the Rowing Club for two more years. Then news reached the General which caused him to give up all the pussy-footing and strike out boldly. He received a grieving letter from the Superior in Australia, Father Timothy Kenny, which informed him that

More or less under the eye of the Minister the boys preparing for regatta were naked perfectly – and rubbed or pinched, to prepare for race, by other boys ... So too they all went into a room to take baths with externs from Protestant schools (here sinks of iniquity) after football matches and in many other ways morality was in danger without the authorities of the house knowing anything about what was going on or, as in the case of the Rector, and Minister, who for years had been doing little but looking after games, had in a certain sense become demoralised thinking our boys should be allowed to do as the boys at Protestant schools. I had to battle with him ... but I have not convinced the Minister.

In his reply the General headed one item: '*De re scandalosa apud Riverview* [Concerning the Scandal at Riverview]'

... he ordered that every care must be taken that those immodesties be entirely rooted out of the school. In fact, if it is necessary to the accomplishment of this that the Regatta itself be abolished, then let that be done (*ita fiat*). Further, it must be seen to that great care and great vigilance over the boys is exercised by truly religious prefects, to the extent that mixing with boys from other schools who seem to be suspect in this matter is absolutely forbidden. In a word, whatever makes for uncleanness

(*immunditia*) must be driven out forthwith from the confines of the College, lest the divine wrath be stirred up against us, and the College, to the great infamy of the Society, be punished by God.

(I would note in passing that Rome long seemed to have a concern for ‘whatever makes for uncleanness’. In 1961 after Riverview boys had combined with Marist Woolwich girls to put on a number of plays, Rome thundered, ‘*Praxis est abhorrenda.*’)

Father Gartlan was transferred to the parish at North Sydney. Four years later he was back at the school, this time as Rector, as the hastily improvised replacement for Fr Luke Murphy who seems to have had something even more damning hanging over him. In Tommy Gartlan’s second term as Rector, beginning in 1913, it was also as a rushed replacement for Fr Patrick Keating who had died of a cerebral haemorrhage. On each occasion it seems to have been a case of ‘Quick, whom have we got who knows the place?’, and lo! Father Gartlan’s name led all the rest. I never came across any evidence that Fr Gartlan changed his spots over all these years. I judged this focus of his interest and energies significant because he had a far longer period in authority at Riverview than any other Jesuit ever. If anyone put a stamp on the school in those first forty years it was Tommy Gartlan.

Errol neither quotes nor refers to those admonitions from the Jesuit General. Certainly Fr Gartlan being always referred to as Tommy suggests an affection in which he was held, notably by selected old boys and the rowing fraternity. Errol’s use of the word ‘triumph’ signals unalloyed approval and praise. It has nothing of the ironical in it. Whereas my pun, “The Watershed”, refers both to Fr Gartlan’s rowing fixation and to his tenures as Rector marking a definitive break away from the academic spirit of the earliest years.

Let me take another defining Jesuit, also an Irishman – Fr Tommy McLoughlin, known as Fr Mac. (In what follows I’ll be giving some examples, from the book, of my prose with all its tendencies and faults.) Fr Mac taught French, edited the school annual, Our *Alma Mater* and was the contact man for the Old Boys. Before I began work Peter Quin had advised me that of course I had to be objective and write what I found, but, ‘if, for example, if you started to criticise Fr Mac, what would the Old Boys say’.

What the old boys in fact said covered a broad spectrum of approval and otherwise. Having written that, as a young man, Fr Mac could inspire enthusiasm for his subject, I continued in my manuscript,

Yet by his later years one old boy could describe him as a ‘grindingly dull

teacher'. He worked extremely hard at his classes ... Setting homework and then correcting it the same night. As a result he instilled enough of the fundamentals of the language [French] into boys to ensure large numbers of them got a B in French in the Leaving Certificate. But he got little else. In the eleven years, for example between 1944 and 1954, French results at Riverview were 2 Honours, 64 A's and 257 B's. He made almost a policy of sacrificing quality to quantity. To ensure correctness he would make boys spell rather than speak their vocabulary and verbs. Any attempt to acquire French pronunciation was unthinkable. As one old boy described it, he 'taught French rather more as an amusing code than as a language'.

I also marked down his editorship of the *Alma Mater*:

A rather uniform, dull and emasculated document, largely photos of teams, unfunny and year-by-yearly repetitious jottings, obituaries highly suggestive of the notion that a man's main achievements in life were the teams he got into at Riverview (suggestive of such because previous Alma Maters were considered the best or only source of biographical material for these obituaries), notes on old boys that were evidence of hard work but highly selective and full of stock phrases, and sporting results repeated several times.

Father Mac's passion was the old boys. I wrote,

He became a prolific letter-writer to old boys, he encouraged and faithfully attended their reunion dinners all over the state and occasionally in Brisbane and Melbourne. His room, visible to the boys through its low windows onto the verandah, was wallpapered with photos of old boys. His lines of contact were imagined to be infinite, and reached their apotheosis in the belief that throughout the Second World War he kept in contact, through Switzerland, with one old boy, Ewald Uechtritz, Captain of Riverview in 1938 who had come to the school from what had been German New Guinea. Uechtritz was then serving as a U-Boat officer - and was one of the one in five U-boat crew members who survived the war.

(That last sentence I now believe was inaccurate. Ewald was in the German navy, but only posted to a position as second in command of a U-Boat just before the end of the war.)

I summed up.

If Father Mac was Riverview to the old boys and the quintessence of the school they explained to their sons, his significance within the school itself and among the boys was different. Above all he cultivated in that world far more selectively. He had violent and apparently irrational favouritisms. His school world was divided into those he favoured and those he did not, and merit had nothing to do, apparently, with his principles of selection. The

McLoughlin network, of his friends and Alma Mater jotters, tended to be made up of sons of old boys and preferably from the country. Within this restricted world, and in spite of the fact that in his later years his customary manner was a growl, his legend endured.

To comment on my own style ... it doesn't err on the side of charity, it's definite



Gerard Windsor as dux and captain of Riverview, 1962, Image: Our Alma Mater, 1962

in its judgments, the prose bowls along very confidently. It was the first extended prose I had written after two academic theses and I revelled, I think, in being able to use a less inhibited, more individual, voice. And yes, occasionally I could adopt quite a caustic style. So, in an account of the special culinary privileges for sportsmen in top teams, I adopted a mocking, ironical style.

The First XV were given an extra plate of meat for supper, and in 1920 there came a stroke of real theological audacity. On the evening of 29 July, a Friday, always a day of strict carnal abstinence for all Catholics, the football team was served meat. It was no doubt a tense night for some of the more scrupulous, but justification was signalled the following afternoon. The Scots College was overwhelmed 25 points to 3.

I detect in my work an interest in the interaction of the staff or, more specifically, the dynamics, the politics of the Jesuit themselves. Riverview, that is, as a Jesuit community and not just as an educational establishment. So I readily included items that might not have had anything to do with the running of a school as such but that

said something about the outlook of the men running it. I can finger four reasons for my making these choices and inclusions and for Errol's not doing so. Firstly, because I had been a Jesuit insider myself, and remained interested in the internal dynamics of the Society of Jesus. Secondly, because I had known the school when

it was still essentially a Jesuit enterprise, and that was twenty five years before Errol experienced it. I had known it when the Jesuits were still 75% of the teaching staff. By the time Errol had arrived in 1977 they were only 30%, and by the time he wrote his book they were down to 20%. Thirdly, Errol by his own description was a puritan and, I would add, reverential, whereas I was irreverent and even gossipy. Fourthly, it appears that Errol never consulted the Jesuit archives in Rome.

Certainly for the first forty years there was plenty of material to illustrate that Jesuit community interaction. Errol gives, for example, three passing mentions to Fr Timothy Kenny, Superior of the Mission in the late 1890s. Whereas I found much to use in Kenny's letters. In 1896 for example, after his annual visitation of the school, Kenny wrote to the General:

That visitation was a painful one, as the house was bristling with irregularities that I feared tended to immorality among the boys. I found the scholastics discontent and with no respect for either Rector [John Ryan] or Minister [Tommy Gartlan], who did very little for religious discipline. The Rector, an excellent religious himself, was really anxious to have all in the house perfect but left everything to the Minister Fr Gartlan, who was not kind to the scholastics nor himself a model.

The General in turn wrote to John Ryan warning that he had heard that 'Futile and superficial books, commonly referred to as novels and romances etc have been sometimes seen in the hands of the scholastics and the boys'. Sex of course hovers unmentioned here, and quite explicitly Rome told the school to get rid of female staff. Patrick Keating protested that male employees were undesirable because they had to be paid more. On it being insisted that he replace the female cook with a male, he defended the school's practice, 'It is to be feared that those male cooks, who are almost always drunk, will introduce evil women into the house'.

There was a running sore about the infirmarian. Rome was outraged that Fr Dalton should be attended to in his bedroom by a woman, and that another dying priest should be lifted from a fall onto the floor by female hands.

Then there was drink. Timothy Kenny told the General that John Ryan was too much under the thumb of several of his subordinates, so that 'when I asked him not to give the Community any more European wines, which cost so much (on feast days), but colonial wine as is given in our other houses and by Bishops and secular priests he answered this would vex Frs. Hughes and O'Connell'.

In 1896, I wrote, a laybrother,

Brother Earley suffered a severe mental collapse and was found one night

wandering naked through a house in Hunter's Hill. The affair was an embarrassment to the school, and John Ryan wrote from Riverview to Patrick Keating, commenting on some reactions to a forthcoming court hearing: "The Bro. Earley affair ... Fr Nulty's views – leave everything in the hands of constable – none of ours should be there – I told him I disagree altogether. The veriest Larrikin would have some friend under the circumstances." Brother Earley was committed to an asylum, where his fellow Jesuits visited him.

So that was forty five years ago. Now, in 2022, my belief is that the history I wrote was not suitable for a centenary publication. It was too idiosyncratic. Many, maybe most, of the potential buyers, old boys and parents, would have expected elements in it that I hadn't got around to or didn't care for. I gave no sustained attention to sporting activities, I pointed to a conservative bias in the outlook of the school and its clientele, I did not adopt a default attitude of reverence in talking about members of the Society of Jesus. And there was an edge to the writing, a regular irony that would have made for uncomfortable, even outraged, reading for those who expected at least a neutral, if not celebratory, account.

In addition, these forty five years on, I can see that all those 1890s strictures and admonitions from the General and other Superiors that were centred on the person of Fr Gartlan, might now be laughed off as merely the hidebound reactions of a puritan and bigoted class. That in fact Tommy Gartlan was defining a new, relaxed Australian ethos for Riverview. But I didn't see that at the time, and I don't think such a reading washes even now. What's more Errol didn't try it, and I don't think that being the man he was, it would have occurred to him either.

My own critical judgment is that my book was highly readable, had personality, was replete with colour. Less so once I was amongst the moderns, where there were the living to be considered, and the archival material that gave so much vividness to an account of the early years was absent. Nevertheless, for all the indispensable quality of Errol's book, I would arrogantly claim that his was the book to consult but mine the one to read.

Errol does not mention Brother Earley at all. Whereas I feel that a history of Riverview is worth writing just to preserve that sentiment of John Ryan – 'the veriest Larrikin would have some friend under the circumstances'.

CATHEDRAL FOLLY: THE ORIGIN OF THE 1960 PLAN TO BUILD A BRUTALIST STYLE CATHEDRAL AT NEW NORCIA

by John Challis*

In May 1960 the New Norcia Benedictine Community surprised church leaders and architectural journals with the announcement that the building of a new modernist style cathedral and monastery, designed by internationally famous Italian architect Luigi Nervi, would soon commence at New Norcia.

This article traces the history of earlier proposals to build a new cathedral at New Norcia dating back to 1900 and how this unexpected Nervi plan originated and was given the go-ahead.

Following the failure of the project, the plans and working drawings lay forgotten in the New Norcia Archives until re-discovered in 2012 by Curtin University architectural historian Dr Annette Condello. They have recently been placed on permanent exhibition in the New Norcia Museum.



Figure 1: *Foundation stone laying for the planned cathedral. The Record, 16 May 1946*

Let me begin by clarifying some terminology in my nominated title. The term ‘folly’ is used in landscape gardening to describe an extravagant, ‘over-the-top’ gazebo or decorative feature. It doesn’t imply any culpable failure. The term ‘brutalist’ doesn’t mean ‘ugly’ or ‘menacing’. It is a mistranslation of the French phrase *beton brut*, meaning ‘raw

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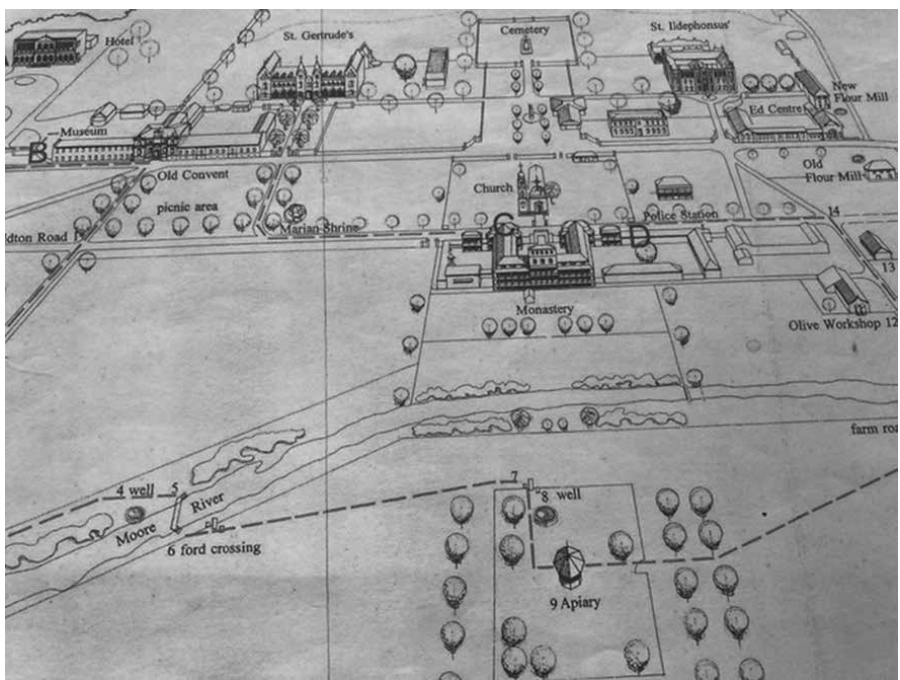


Figure 2: *New Norcia town map*. NNA working copy

concrete'. The building materials are exposed and not covered up. The best way to think of brutalist buildings is as huge geometric sculptures. I propose to discuss how the New Norcia project originated, what the driving forces behind it were, and why it failed to come to fruition.

My first visit to New Norcia was as a young seminarian in May 1946 on an excursion from St Charles Seminary in Perth. It was part of the centenary celebrations for the diocese of Perth and the Benedictine mission at New Norcia. I remember being shown the recently-laid foundation stone for a new cathedral (Figure 1). It was located on the lower edge of the cemetery on the central axis facing the old cathedral and the monastery. The stone had been solemnly blessed by Cardinal Gilroy the previous Saturday. The new cardinal had come to Perth with an entourage of Australian bishops to preside at the centenary celebrations.

The foundation stone laid by the cardinal back in 1946 was for a cathedral designed by the resident monk-architect, Dom Urban Gimenez. It is officially described as being in the 'English Classical' style, reminiscent of St Paul's Cathedral in London,

and would have been 320' (100 metres) long and 168' (50 metres) high, so nearly three times higher than the existing cathedral belfry. It is a very elegant design and being built of grey cement would have blended in well with the historical atmosphere of the town. It was announced that building would commence as soon as the wartime shortage of materials ended.

But this 1946 plan was not the first attempt to build a new cathedral at New Norcia. Abbot Torres, appointed in 1900, drew up a plan and probably would have implemented it had he not died unexpectedly in 1915. In 1918 the priest-architect from Geraldton, Fr John Hawes, wrote to Abbot Catalan recommending 'most highly a foreman-mason Mr Joseph Bailey, for any works, such as building your cathedral'.¹ In a much later letter Hawes says that he had drawn up plans for a baroque cathedral at the request of Abbot Catalan but it had been replaced by a new design. This was probably the design by the abbot visitor from Rome, Abbot Guzzi, who visited New Norcia around 1935. He was pushing Abbot Catalan to get started on a new cathedral and sketched a design. As we have seen, finally in 1946 the foundation stone for the long-awaited new cathedral was laid.

This raises two questions: why did this monastery church serving a small country town have the title 'cathedral'? And why were successive abbots after Salvado continually pre-occupied with building a new and more impressive cathedral? To answer these questions we need to go back to the founder of New Norcia, Dom Rosendo Salvado, later Bishop Salvado, who enshrined and nurtured its genius loci—its 'spirit of place'.²

Salvado was born into a wealthy, music-loving family in Galicia in north-western Spain. At age fifteen he entered the famous monastery of St Martin at Compostella. After his profession as a monk he did a two-year course in organ playing and was appointed organist of the abbey. He was a talented pianist and composer, which played an important role in his later life in Western Australia.

In 1835 the anti-clerical government in Spain closed the monasteries and secularised the monks. Salvado made his way to Italy and was accepted into the

1 J Hawes, personal correspondence to A Catalan, 16 January 1918, BCNN, NNA, 01691.

2 Here I'm indebted to my former Manly colleague George Russo for his 1980 biography of Salvado based on Salvado's diaries and detailed records preserved in the New Norcia Archives: G Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness: the life and times of Bishop Salvado*, Polding Press, Melbourne, 1980, p. 257. I've also drawn on Odhran O'Brien's detailed account of the dispute between Bishop Serra and Bishop Salvado in his biography of Martin Griver, the third bishop of Perth: O O'Brien, *Martin Griver unearthed: the life of a Spanish missionary priest who became a bishop in colonial Western Australia, 1814–1886*, St Paul's Publications, Strathfield, NSW, 2015.

Benedictine monastery at Cava near Naples. He was ordained a priest and resumed his role as the monastery organist. His entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography says that he gave the abbey a new organ ‘rivalling the best in Europe’—he must have got some money out of Spain! ³He then met up with Irish bishop John Brady, the newly appointed first bishop of Perth who was looking for missionaries for his diocese. Along with fellow Spanish Benedictine priest Jose Serra, a group of brothers and the first Mercy Sisters, Salvado sailed with Brady from London and arrived in Perth in January 1846. The missionaries moved north and made contact with the aboriginal people on the banks of a small river, later called the Moore River, and started clearing land for a farm.

Serra was the senior priest in charge but he was a rather delicate, academic type and soon returned to Perth where he became vicar general and later the administrator to the absent, bankrupt Brady. Salvado became the de facto founder and guiding spirit of the New Norcia Mission.

There were two sides to Salvado’s character. On the one hand, he was the missionary priest with a genuine empathy and respect for the dignity and potential of the Aboriginal people. Dressed in dungarees he sat around the campfire with them in the evening, listening to their stories, writing down words and songs and starting a dictionary of their language.



Figure 3: *Dom Urban Cathedral*. NNA 00422

³ D William, ‘Salvado, Rosendo (1814–1900)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1967, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, viewed 29 March 2022, <<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/salvado-rosendo-2627>>.

At a piano recital he gave in Perth to raise funds he mimicked their songs and the sounds of a corroboree, raising seventy pounds. His plan was to develop their skills as tradesmen and farmers and give them ownership of small farms. At the height of his success, twenty-two Aboriginal families formed a village near the monastery working their farms nearby and sharing in the cultural life of the monastic town with a cricket team—always winning against Perth—a brass band and string orchestra. The telegraph office had an Aboriginal post mistress to whom Salvado proudly taught morse code.

Meanwhile in Perth, Serra, following the age-old Benedictine missionary model, established a second monastery on 300 acres of land between Mongers Lake and Herdsman's Lake and planted 60,000 vines, olive groves and fruit trees. The monks ministered to the small Catholic communities in Perth and Fremantle and supplied produce to the bishop's palace. He also had plans for a monastery at Dardanup to minister to the southwest.

Salvado became increasingly concerned that resources of men and money coming from Spain, largely through his contacts, were being diverted away from the mission at New Norcia. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the land grant and all the property at New Norcia legally belonged to the bishop of Perth.

After several years of correspondence and personal lobbying in Rome, Salvado secured the complete independence of New Norcia from the diocese of Perth. In 1867 it was given the coveted title of *Abbey Nullius Diocesis* with its own parishes in nearby towns. This was later extended to 30,000 square miles, stretching south to Bindoon, north to Moora and east into the rich wheat and sheep belt as far as Southern Cross. Salvado was given the title of 'vicar apostolic' and appointed 'lord abbot' for life. The Abbey Church became a Cathedral with an episcopal throne.

The second side to Salvado's character was his role as one of the leading figures of the European Benedictine hierarchy. On a visit to Rome in 1849 Salvado was unexpectedly nominated bishop of the new British settlement of Port Victoria, near present day Darwin. By the time news got back to Rome that the British had abandoned the settlement, Salvado had already been consecrated. After some doubt as to his future he was allowed to return to New Norcia with the added prestige of being a bishop. One of his aims in Europe was to establish a college attached to one of the great Spanish monasteries in order to recruit novices for New Norcia. On a visit to Spain in 1867 through his brother Santos (also a priest and confessor to Queen Isabella) Salvado had extensive discussions with the queen about his plans for perpetuating the Spanish culture of New Norcia, and the queen nominated

him to be president of the Escorial, the great monastic complex outside Madrid, housing the tomb of Charles the Fifth, and a prestigious college which could recruit novices for New Norcia. George Russo says, 'News spread to other parts of the Benedictine world and the results were enormous...the news excited New Norcia like the forecast of rain during a drought'.⁴

Salvado had no qualms about being able to combine the two positions, which would have made New Norcia one of the most prestigious abbeys of the Benedictine world; but the papal nuncio to Madrid thought otherwise and had the appointment cancelled. Salvado was ordered to return to New Norcia.

Although he continued to promote Aboriginal welfare, Russo says, ... from the 1870's life was prosperous and more settled, and Salvado could concentrate on making New Norcia the cultural centre he hoped it could become.⁵

The abbey farms became the most modern and prosperous in Western Australia, with pastoral leases of 900,000 square acres. Foremost amongst his concerns was establishing a library worthy of a great abbey. George Russo devotes a whole chapter entitled 'A Library in the Desert' to it. I visited the library as a student in 1950 and marvelled at the 260 volumes of Migne's *Patrology*, a 15th century edition of St Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, rare editions of the Bible and copious works on art and architecture, literature and contemporary journals. From his experience of the great abbeys of Europe, Salvado understood that the two distinguishing features of Benedictine abbeys were their libraries and their impressive churches, so it's reasonable to assume that Salvado had the same ambition for New Norcia.

In 1899 at age 85, Salvado travelled to Rome to celebrate his golden jubilee as a bishop. In Rome he heard that his assistant abbot and expected successor at New Norcia, Prior Dominguez, had died. He had already been impressed by a monk from Montserrat, Dom Fulgentius Torres, with whom he spent some time in Naples, and proposed that Torres should be his successor and return with him to New Norcia. It's reasonable to assume that he would have outlined to Torres his vision and plans for New Norcia, including the building of an impressive new cathedral to replace the modest church which was one of the oldest buildings in the town. Torres was with Salvado in Rome when he died unexpectedly in December 1900.

During my visit to New Norcia in February 1950 I noticed that the foundation stone for the new cathedral, which I had seen laid with great ceremony in 1946, had

4 Russo, p. 102.

5 *ibid.*, p. 226.

been removed from the cemetery. I was told that it had been placed in a storeroom and that the cathedral project had been deferred due to Abbot Catalan's age. Many years later, Archivist Peter Hocking told me he couldn't find any trace of it. Sadly it may have been taken away by a builder and broken up. I could be one of the last surviving witnesses to have seen it!



Figure 4: *Cathedral interior, 1955.* NNA W7-A4-2-268

On 12 January 1951 an article appeared in *The West Australian* newspaper announcing that the Pilgrim Statue of Our Lady of Fatima had arrived in Perth as part of a world anti-communist tour and was to be taken from the Christian Brothers Farm School at Bindoon in a motorcade on Saturday night and feted with a High Mass at New Norcia on Sunday.⁶ I was a deacon, sporting a Roman collar, on holidays from Manly, and my mother who saw the article asked me to drive her and some of her friends to New Norcia for the Sunday Mass. What puzzled me was that there was no mention of the Pilgrim Statue in Perth's Catholic paper *The Record*

⁶ 'Pilgrim statue in hospital procession', *The West Australian*, 12 January 1951, p. 2

and no official reception of the statue in Perth. The clerical gossip was that this was because Archbishop Prendiville, possibly prompted by Cardinal Gilroy, was concerned that the Fatima Pilgrimage Statue and its message would be identified with the Menzies government's campaign to ban the Communist Party.

Abbot Catalan had no such qualms and several hundred pilgrims from Perth drove to New Norcia for the Mass at an outdoor altar as the cathedral was too small to accommodate the crowd. The Marian shrine as it became is still there. Similarly, bishops in the Eastern States who supported the Santamaria Movement held huge rallies culminating in 100,000 people (according to Archbishop Duhig's notoriously elastic estimates) lining the streets of Brisbane to welcome the Fatima Statue.

All of this may seem irrelevant, except that reports of these huge rallies got back to New Norcia and the idea took hold, especially in the mind of the newly appointed abbot, Gregory Gomez, that New Norcia could become a pilgrimage centre attracting pilgrims from all over Australia; and of course a new and bigger cathedral would be needed. It's also important to remember that pilgrimages were very much part of popular Catholic culture in the 1950s. It had been declared a Holy Year by Pius XII and 700 Australians led by Archbishop Duhig formed the Australian National Pilgrimage to Rome, Lourdes, Fatima and Ireland.

The new abbot Gregory Gomez was Spanish, but with a difference. He was a novice at Montserrat and continued his studies at New Norcia but was sent to study theology for four years with Australian students at Manly seminary, and so imbibed some Aussie traits. He then studied for a doctorate at the Benedictine University in Rome, and most significantly spent two years at the famous German Benedictine Abbey of Maria Laach, which under Abbot Herwegen was one of the leading centres of the movement for the reform and revitalisation of the liturgy. Mulcahy says Gomez's 'term was marked by openness to new ideas and readiness to consult'.⁷

One of the most revealing documents which Archivist Peter Hocking made available to me are extracts from the *Monastery Chronicle*, the community diary of the monks—it reads almost like a daily gossip column. The entry for 1 April 1955 reads:

Abbot Gomez this afternoon called a meeting of all solemnly professed monks to cast their votes on a decision of paramount importance for the

⁷ C Mulcahy, 'Gomez, Gregory (Dom) (1904–1995)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2020, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, viewed 29 March 2022, < <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gomez-gregory-dom-29919/>>.

future development of New Norcia Abbey, namely, the building of a new church in conformity with the Liturgy, and a new monastery. It was decided to call tenders for plans and specifications amongst architects in Australia, Europe and America.⁸

Note the phrase 'a new church in conformity with the liturgy'. 1955 was the year the new Easter liturgy was introduced so it's reasonable to conclude that what prompted Abbot Gomez to suddenly revive the cathedral project was the need for a more suitable space to carry out the new Holy Week liturgy. I remember what the cathedral interior looked like in 1955—it certainly needed a make-over (Figure 4)!

But six months later there was still no mention of tenders or meetings.⁹ However, the idea of a new cathedral was still alive and on Wednesday 8 May 1957 the *Chronicle* reads: 'Today a sketch model of the future cathedral has been shown to the community';¹⁰ and on 4 October: 'Abbot Gomez to Rome to discuss the cathedral'.¹¹ He was away from New Norcia for nine months.

In Rome he discussed the cathedral project with Abbot Guzzi, the abbot primate who had visited New Norcia in 1935 and drawn up a plan for Abbot Catalan to implement. This time Abbot Guzzi referred Gomez to the recently established Institute of Liturgical Art, which was an offshoot of the Liturgical Movement. The aim of the Institute was to involve modern architects in church design and experiment with new layouts for churches to suit the changes to the liturgy, especially greater participation by the laity. Leading up to the Vatican Council this was part of a change to the mindset of the Church, from that of a monarchical institution ruled by bishops and priests, to that of a community of believers, served by priests and bishops. Think of the symbolism of the Holy Thursday liturgy, bishops and priests washing the feet of the laity. This led to rethinking the shape of churches, placing the altar in the centre of circular or oval-shaped churches with the congregation gathered around it as a community and the priest facing the people, speaking their language.

Following several weeks of discussions with Abbot Gomez the Institute issued the following enthusiastic statement:

In the autumn of 1957 the International Institute of Liturgical Art has been

8 *Monastery Chronicle*, 1 April 1955, Benedictine Community of New Norcia [BCNN], New Norcia Archives [NNA], 00480.

9 see: *ibid.*, 2 April 1957, a later entry containing Nervi references.

10 *ibid.*, 8 May 1957.

11 *ibid.*, 4 October 1957.

presented with a greater challenge than any it has previously undertaken. This is the construction of a completely new cathedral and Abbey, to be erected at New Norcia in Australia. The Institute has selected a team of architects and civil engineers to be led by Professor Luigi Nervi, an architect of international renown.

The Institute is now preparing to carry out the whole project at New Norcia from the planning to the actual direction of the work, and finally, with the aid of world-famous artists, the interior. It is a most arduous task. The Institute has for the first time the opportunity to create from start to finish a church which is to be the sum of all its experience and ideals, and which will be a living expression of the religious faith of our age.¹²

I suspect that Abbot Gomez was swept off his feet by an offer too good to refuse.

Nervi was the inventor of ferro-cement, which made it possible to span much larger spaces with lighter and more elegant structures. He had already been the structural engineer for the roof of a new church at St John's Benedictine Abbey at Collegeville, Minnesota, the centre of the Liturgical Movement in the United

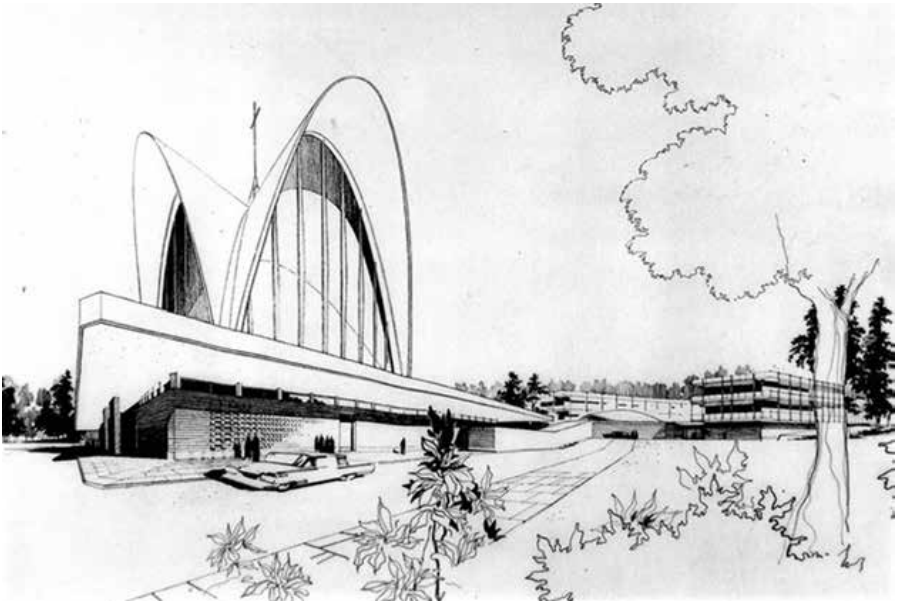


Figure 5: *Nervi cathedral exterior.*

¹² Istituto internazionale di arte liturgica, Viale Bruno Buozzi, Litart, Roma, NNA, 05177.

States. Nervi had also been co-designer of the new underground basilica at Lourdes and of the stadium for the Rome Olympics. He was to be assisted by a leading Italian architect, Carlo Vannoni, who was to design the monastery.

More than six months later on 1 June 1958, Abbot Gomez arrived back in New Norcia with well-advanced drawings of the project. *The Chronicle* reads:

...in the afternoon Lord Abbot calls a meeting of the community to explore the feelings of the monks about the idea of the future cathedral presented by the Institute of Liturgical Art.¹³

Figures 5 and 6 shows some of the drawings that were shown to the undoubtedly surprised monks. The diary records their reaction:

All were in agreement that the cathedral is necessary, even if costly. The only exception was the old Abbot Catalan, who with excessive caution to spend money, thinks that we should wait until we have in hand every penny that will be required. He thinks it is a ridiculous vanity.¹⁴

Then in September two beautiful models arrived by boat from Italy. The parabolic arch of the larger model was removable to give a view of the interior. The architect Vannoni arrived with detailed working drawings running into many pages for discussions with the monks, mainly about the position of the altar and furnishings.

Vannoni also met with George Hondros, a civil engineer from University of Western Australia whom Abbot Gomez had appointed project manager to liaise with the Italian contractors, particularly for the parabolic arches which were to be built in Italy and shipped to Perth. Hondros also finalised the costs. In a letter to the Institute in July 1959 he estimated it to be £670,000. He concluded the letter:

I am quite confident from discussions I have had with the Lord Abbot, that he is aiming to raise capital which makes the present project feasible.¹⁵

The Lord Abbot was indeed busy trying to raise funds. *The Chronicle* records that he had meetings with Premier Albert Hawke (Bob Hawke's uncle) and with Prime Minister Robert Menzies 'to get some help in whatever form with the building of the cathedral'.¹⁶

The entry for 23 October 1959 reads:

The Lord Abbot had no luck at the bank. The Roman Institute wants money and the bank refuses to advance it without guarantees. The Lord Abbot

¹³ *Monastery Chronicle*, 2 June 1958.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ G Hondros, personal correspondence to C Giacomini, Managing Director, Instituto Internazionale Di Arte Liturgica, Roma, 16 July 1959, NNA, 02744.

¹⁶ *Monastery Chronicle*, 23 January 1959, 00481.

thought that what we wrote to him in Rome were groundless fears, but bankers are people who deal in hard facts.¹⁷

The other source of funds were the sale of five blocks of land in East Perth behind St Mary's Cathedral, which the monastery owned. It was zoned residential and light industry but the CBD was expected to develop in that direction, resulting in an increase in value up to more than £300,000. But that was still in the future. *The Chronicle* for 23 February 1960 records:

Lord Abbot up and down to Perth in connection with the sale of Goderich St



Figure 6: *Nervi cathedral interior.*

land to get funds for the architects, but nothing doing there.¹⁸

Despite these setbacks the project was officially launched in the April 1960 edition of *Pax*, the official organ of the vicariate of New Norcia:

We are pleased to bring readers the first official information on the proposed new Cathedral and Monastery for New Norcia. The site has been chosen and has been cleared.¹⁹

The article, with a dramatic photo of the tri-fronted parabolic arch, goes on to describe the three great stain glass windows, each depicting a person of the Trinity.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 23 October 1959.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 23 February 1960.

¹⁹ 'New monastery for New Norcia', *Pax*, BCNN, April 1960, NNA, S1-B-Top, p. 1.

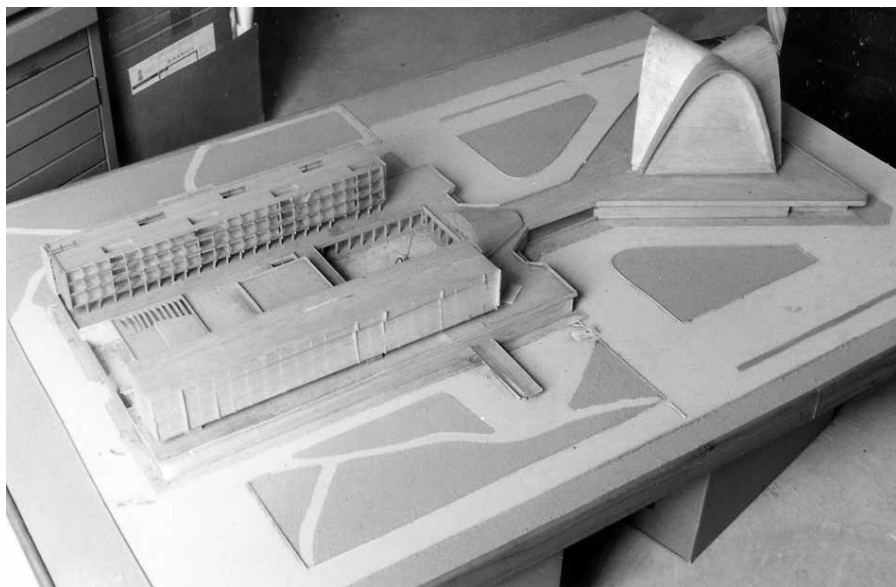


Figure 7: *Timber model of proposed cathedral.*

It concludes:

The beauty of the surroundings will match the beauty of the Cathedral which we shall soon see, God willing, arising on the site. The prayers and financial support of all are earnestly invited in this great work.²⁰

Similar short articles appeared in the Catholic press in Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne. I'd left Perth by then and was at the Dominican Priory in Melbourne but I don't recall much excitement about the New Norcia project amongst my clerical colleagues of the Liturgical Movement in the eastern states.

By contrast the announcement created intense interest in architectural circles. The June 1960 edition of the magazine *Architecture Today* had a photo cover and feature article welcoming 'Australia's first Nervian structure'.²¹ There was enthusiastic coverage of the project in New York and in Italy. In Sydney Harry Seidler was prompted by the New Norcia project to engage Nervi as the structural engineer for his Australia Square project.

To launch the public appeal the models were placed on exhibition in Boans

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ 'Australia's first Nervian structure', *Australian Architecture Today*, vol. 2, June 1960, p. 16.



Figure 8: 3D model of proposed cathedral.

department store in Perth. But even that didn't seem to go well, as the *Chronicle* notes:

...we thought the entrance fee would be the beginning of the building fund, but we read in the paper today that it was to help paraplegic children.²²

Archbishop Prendiville gave £100 and, typical of an archivist, Peter Hocking has kept his father-in-law's receipt for a £10 donation. However, the 1960s were a time of expanding suburbs in Perth and new schools and churches had a higher priority than New Norcia's glamorous cathedral and monastery.

From 1961 to 1964 the blocks of land in East Perth were sold one-by-one but the funds were insufficient to commence building and the Nervi plans were quietly filed away for posterity. One last effort was made to give New Norcia its coveted cathedral. Perth architects Henderson and Thompson were commissioned to produce a smaller design and they came up with a more traditional rectangular design. Again rising building costs and the declining number of monks coming from Spain dampened enthusiasm for it to proceed. Due to a shortage of priests the parishes were gradually handed over to Perth and in 1980 New Norcia lost its cherished status as an Abbey *Nullius* and the Abbey Church ceased to be a

²² *Monastery Chronicle*, 22 February 1960.

cathedral. The elaborately carved abbot's throne is now in the New Norcia Museum.

Abbot Gomez retired in 1971 and died in a car accident in 1995. The entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* says that his successor, 'Abbot Rooney recalled that his light heartedness in failure and disappointment meant that he never lost a wink of sleep through worry'.²³

Fortunately the detailed plans and the models were preserved in the Monastery Archives and were cataloged by Peter Hocking when he became archivist in 2007. Academic interest in the Nervi cathedral was rekindled in 2012 by Dr Annette Condello of Curtin University who saw a reference to the New Norcia project in a book on Nervi, which she bought in a bookshop in Kuala Lumpur. Dr Condello made a detailed study of the archival material at New Norcia and delivered a report on her research at a symposium entitled 'Unbuilt Perth', organised by the Architecture Faculty at UWA.²⁴ In 2014 the UWA faculty led by Rene van Meeuwen produced a pioneering virtual reality video of the model capturing the feeling of being inside the building, which was shown at the Venice Architectural Biennale accompanied by an explanatory essay by Dr Condello. In 2017 she curated an exhibition in Perth entitled 'Outback Modernism: Pier Luigi Nervi and Australia' centred on Nervi's New Norcia project and featuring the virtual reality video shown in Venice. Thanks to Dr Condello's efforts New Norcia's Nervi Cathedral project has a permanent and distinguished place in Australia's architectural history.

One puzzling item remains: in a 1960 interview with Melbourne's *The Herald*



Figure 9: Stained glass window

²³ Mulcahy, op. cit.

²⁴ *Unbuilt Perth*, catalogue for exhibition, Cullity Gallery, Perth, 5 March 2012.

the Perth project manager George Hondros revealed that the three huge stained glass windows designed by Swiss artist Willy Kaufman and the five bronze doors had already been manufactured in Rome and were in storage in the Vatican ready to be installed when the building was ready (Figure 9).²⁵ As far as I know no one from New Norcia has attempted to locate them. Who would have paid for them? Are they still there?

Thanks to the efforts of Peter Hocking the smaller model and images of the Nervi Cathedral and abbey are now permanently on display in the Museum and will be a lasting memorial to his outstanding work as archivist since 2007. Peter has informed me that the larger model is in a 'terrible condition' and needs extensive restoration work. As this is an important item of Australia's architectural heritage the Community could potentially offer it on permanent loan to the architecture faculty of UWA or Curtin University, who may be willing to restore it.

A final thought: there is no purpose-built Catholic Cathedral in Canberra. St Christopher's pro-cathedral in Manuka is merely a modified parish church. On the left-hand side of the road leading onto Commonwealth Bridge there is a magnificent site set aside for a Catholic Cathedral, directly across the lake from the National Library. If at this late stage the Church ever decides to build a cathedral or shrine in Canberra, the Nervi Cathedral, with some interior modifications, would be an outstanding addition to the modernist skyline of Canberra.

25 K Smith, 'Cathedral for Australia', *The Herald*, 20 August 1960, p. 20.

REMEMBERING THE AQUINAS ACADEMY, 1945–2021

Peter McMurrich*

Most of us would know that the founder of the Aquinas Academy, Sydney, was a Marist priest, Austin Woodbury.¹ He was a larger than life character. His parents had a little farm at Spencer on the Hawkesbury. He went through primary school and then spent several years helping his parents on the farm; he educated himself through reading and correspondence courses. In his mid-teens he decided he had a vocation to become a priest, and after completing secondary schooling at Hunters Hill and Mittagong with the Marist Fathers, and several years at the Marist seminary near Napier in New Zealand, he was sent to Rome where he was ordained and where he gained doctorates in philosophy and theology.

Austin Woodbury was 45 years old when he founded the Academy; he was noticeably tall, a bit eccentric, with superior intelligence, equally at home in the arcane world of philosophical and theological speculation, or judging pedigree cattle at local shows, where he was a highly regarded and much sought-after show judge. And he never lost his earthy edge.

Late in 1944 Woodbury gave a talk to the Catholic Journalists' Guild. Back in those days there was a Catholic guild or association for just about every occupation under heaven. A Catholic doctors' guild, a Catholic firemen's guild, Catholic policemen's guild, and obviously a Catholic journalists' guild. And during the talk Woodbury outlined his vision for a new educational venture. In his own words

[An] institute at which young men and women of the professions, and of the public service, of the various institutions of post-school education, teachers and others, might be made acquainted with the profound wisdom of the great Catholic masters of philosophy and theology, and thereby be fitted for the role of guides unto the minds of Australians.²

1 This talk is based on an internal research paper which I wrote for the Marist Fathers' Provincial Council sometime in the mid-1990s; for a comprehensive and engaging telling of the history of the Aquinas Academy, see Julie Thorpe, *Aquinas Academy 1945–2015: A Very Personal Australian Story* (ATF Press, Adelaide, 2016).

2 *Catholic Weekly* press clipping, 25/1/1945, p.1, Australian Marist Provincial Archives (AMPA), C520.10, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/146481420>

* Fr Peter McMurrich sm is Archivist of the Marist Fathers. This is a slightly expanded version of a talk given to a gathering at St Patrick's, Church Hill, on 23 October 2022, marking the closure of the Aquinas Academy at the end of 2021. It provides an outline of the Academy during the terms of its first three directors: Austin Woodbury, John Thornhill, and Allan Connors.

This was a vision which was forward-looking, progressive, inclusive, and in the context of the Church at that time, even somewhat counter-cultural.

- In a Church which was highly clerical and hierarchical and which often dumbed-down its laity, this was a vision which took the laity seriously, and which sought to share with them the power which is knowledge;
- It was a vision which included equally men *and* women;
- It was outward-looking and missionary: the knowledge was being shared so that the recipients could be worthy guides for their fellow Australians

The Aquinas Academy opened in humble premises in Gloucester Street, just at the back of St Patrick's church, Church Hill, on 7 March 1945. In those days, that was the feast of St Thomas Aquinas. The name of the institute, and the date chosen on which to begin, both pointed to the orientation or focus of the Academy. It would teach philosophy and theology according to the insights of the great Dominican medieval philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas. The Academy went from strength to strength. In its first year there were 105 students enrolled in courses; in 1952 there were 300; in 1963, 600.

In an amazing development in the 1960s, Woodbury inspired a number of professional men to put their careers on hold and go to Rome or Canada to pursue full-time university doctorates with a view to returning to the Academy as teachers. At least seven of Woodbury's students followed this path; four returned to Sydney with post-graduate qualifications to resume their former careers and begin a long association with the Academy as lecturers; the remaining three took up academic posts in Canadian universities.

The early 1960s were really the Academy's golden age in its Woodbury period. In addition to the large numbers attending and the developments in the direction of laity teaching laity, there was a strong network of social interaction between students at the Academy, and an 8 page monthly magazine, the *Academician*, carried social news and philosophical and theological articles written by students and lecturers. While numbering among its students Catholics from all walks of life, the Academy was particularly proud to be able to highlight the presence of a number of prominent doctors, lawyers, and university academics in its classes.³

In the pre-Vatican II Church, Woodbury's Academy was a refreshing and forward-looking venture into adult education for Catholics. But even as early as the 1950s there were indications of a fundamental problem which the Academy would increasingly face in the years following the Council: namely the unacceptability of a total commitment to a single philosophical and theological system, in a Church

³ Holdings of *The Academician* at AMPA C520.10.01

which was moving more and more in the direction of plurality.

In March 1955, Sr Aquinas sm, principal of the Marist Sisters College at Woolwich, wrote to Woodbury to alert him that elements within the Newman Society at Sydney University were advising Catholic undergraduates to have nothing to do with the Academy. It was not until 1959, however, that matters came to a head. In that year Woodbury wrote to Cardinal Gilroy complaining that Fr Roger Pryke, the Catholic chaplain at Sydney University, and Dr Grove Johnson, a priest-academic, were publicly criticising the Academy for being narrow and conservative, and actively dissuading Catholics from attending. Gilroy carpeted the dissidents, extracting an undertaking from them that they would make no further comments about the Academy.⁴

But the days of the Academy, at least in the form that Woodbury had visioned it, were definitely numbered. After the peak enrolment of 600+ students in 1963, there were only 243 on the books in 1967. In a confidential report which he wrote that year, Woodbury lamented that inevitably the “anti-Thomistic attitude will go on spreading further among the laity”; it would become increasingly difficult to attract students to night classes against “the powerful competition from television and other forms of entertainment”; and he no longer had the Catholic adult education market to himself, being beset by what he called “various minor organisations (v.g. ‘crash courses’) which were working to divert nuns and brothers from Academy courses”.⁵

Because in many ways Woodbury *was* the Academy, it soared to great heights when he was in his prime. He was a magnetic personality with an idiosyncratic and highly effective teaching style, and an ability to present complex philosophical and theological concepts in a way which made them readily accessible. As he grew older, his personal magnetism also declined, and the Academy declined too. In 1974, the year he retired, enrolled students had dropped to 40. The Academy was as good as dead.

Another Marist theologian, Fr John Thornhill, was appointed the new principal. He clearly had a massive task ahead to return the Academy to some sort of viability. He presided over a holding operation in 1975 while he travelled overseas in search of ideas and new approaches, but by the beginning of the 1976 academic year he was ready to move. Basically, he sought to tap into what he hoped was a large market of Catholics who had come through the changes of Vatican II, but who recognised the

⁴ Sr Aquinas sm to Woodbury, 14/3/1955, AMPA C520.05 & Gilroy to Woodbury, 24/12/1959, AMPA C520.05

⁵ Report at AMPA C520.08

need for a new theological underpinning to replace their pre-conciliar theological world view. While retaining a large number of the Academy's Thomistic philosophy courses, he switched the primary emphasis to courses in renewal theology, outlining a rationale which was fundamentally different from the Academy's previous single-system approach:

Within the history of the Church's experience there have emerged a plurality of orthodox theologies. The course sets out to give the student a positive appreciation of this theological pluralism.⁶

But there was a need to tread carefully, lest the break with the past appear too dramatic and alienate potential students, particularly among the Academy's former alumni. The new principal's footwork was deft:

At the same time, the orientation of the course centres on the theological insights of St. Thomas Aquinas, so ready to assimilate all that is valuable in other theological achievements.

This, incidentally, was no cynical marketing exercise. Thornhill brought to his new job an impressive personal theological synthesis of Thomistic thought married to contemporary theological insight. This was the foundation on which the Academy was to be successfully reborn and relaunched.

Ironically, at the very time that Woodbury's project was being restructured and re-invented, John Thornhill was able to negotiate an affiliation for the Academy with the Roman University of St. Thomas. This was something Woodbury had been trying to achieve for many years, since he recognised that one of the weaknesses of his existing framework was the inability of the Academy to grant degrees. The affiliation was negotiated during 1975-77, and became operative in 1978. It covered philosophy courses only.⁷

In 1977 Thornhill was joined by Fr Allan Connors, who brought a particular speciality in empirical psychology and human development. In 1978 a new course, the Christian Maturity Programme, was launched (later re-badged the Christian Growth Programme), combining a course in theological renewal with a personal development component. Allan Connors' other contribution at this point was to suggest that the Academy take its courses to the suburbs rather than expect people to travel at night into the city. By utilising parish venues in various parts of Sydney, the Academy was able to gain access to many thousands of attendees who would have balked at travelling to city-based courses.

6 "Orientation of a Course of Adult Education in Theology Commencing at the Aquinas Academy", nd, AMPA C520.10

7 AMPA C520.10

A further significant development during John Thornhill's term as principal was the introduction of a two-year Catechetics course providing accreditation for religion teachers in Catholic schools.

Allan Connors took over as principal of the Academy in 1981, with the completion of John Thornhill's 6 year appointment. He built on the Academy extension concept by taking the Christian Growth Programme further and further afield: to Newcastle, for example, in 1981, and Wollongong in 1982. In 1994 the Academy was presenting the programme on a weekly basis in four towns and cities in the Armidale diocese; in subsequent years Connors travelled to other NSW dioceses with the programme, and later ventured into Victoria.

Connors also pioneered the development of highly successful Aquinas Academy Summer Schools, bringing out the British psychiatrist Dr Jack Dominion in 1982 and 1986, Professor Gerard Egan from Loyola University in 1983 and 1984, and marriage and sexual development educators Evelyn and James Whitehead in 1985. Dominion's first visit was marked by great controversy, with conservative Catholics mounting protests against his alleged lack of fidelity to the Church's teaching authority. 300 turned up to protest on 18 January 1982, when he spoke at St Joseph's College at Hunters Hill, but three times that number paid to hear him speak.⁸ Allan Connors mused at the time that in his experience there was no such thing as bad publicity.

Another successful development of the Connors years was the introduction of weekend workshops and seminars on Myers-Briggs and Enneagram personality profiles.

In 1985 the Academy had 1000 students enrolled in its ongoing courses, and this had jumped to 2000 by 1991. These figures do not include enrolments at "one-off" workshops and presentations.

The mid-eighties marked the final break with the Thomistic philosophy courses which were once the Academy's mainstay. These ceased in 1986. Several of the lay lecturers, who had taught these courses since the mid-sixties, were understandably disappointed by this final break with Woodbury's vision, and attempted with modest success to revive the courses on a private basis. A further consequence of the cessation of philosophy courses at the Academy was the termination of the link with the University of St Thomas in 1991.⁹

In more recent years Kevin Bates and then Michael Whelan brought their

⁸ Press clippings AMPA C520.05

⁹ AMPA C520.05.01; Provincial Council Minutes, March 1991

personal gifts and strengths to the work of the Academy, each moulding and shaping it in a different way as John Thornhill and Allan Connors had done before them. The Academy finally closed its doors at the end of 2021, with the Covid years hastening its gradual demise.

Michael Whelan spent 21 years in charge of the Academy up until its closure, a term bettered only by the 29-year- reign of the formidable Dr Woodbury. In a way they are fitting bookends for the 77 year history of the Academy, a beginning and an end, and many good things in between, for which many people might find themselves eventually being eternally grateful.

CAMPION COLLEGE AUSTRALIA: THE GENESIS OF A CATHOLIC LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

Karl Schmude*

Campion College Australia is Australia's first liberal arts college – and even more distinctively, its first Catholic liberal arts college. It was founded by two Catholic laymen after decades of preparation beginning in the late 1960s. Opened in 2006 in the western Sydney suburb of Toongabbie, it is an accredited institution of higher education, independent of both Church and State and funded by philanthropic donations, large and small, and tuition fees.

The College is named in honour of the 16th century English scholar and martyr, St Edmund Campion. He was first invoked by the Campion Society, the Catholic lay association of study groups that was formed in 1931 in Melbourne and rapidly spread throughout rural Victoria and interstate. The movement was reanimated in the 1970s with the establishment of the John XXIII Fellowship (later renamed the Campion Fellowship).

Naming the College in the 2000s after St Edmund Campion was a logical outgrowth of this Australian Catholic tradition of lay intellectuality and adult education. It came about organically rather than as an act of formal adoption, and no other name was contemplated during the planning years.

Campion was inspired by several factors, intellectual, institutional, and personal. The first was a new program of liberal arts education proposed by the English Catholic historian, Christopher Dawson, based on the study of Christian culture in history rather than the classical, pre-Christian tradition of Greece and Rome.

I had the good fortune to read in 1968 Dawson's *The Crisis of Western Education* (1961). I was immediately enlivened by his outline of a program of Christian culture, studied through the lens of disciplines as diverse as history, literature, philosophy, theology, art, architecture, and music. It set me thinking on the value of such a program being available in Australia. I had completed an Arts degree at the University of Sydney in the mid-1960s, studying various subjects including Latin and English literature, but it lacked any principle of unity or integration that would have fostered intellectual synthesis or cultural penetration.

* Karl Schmude is co-founder of Campion College, a former University Librarian at the University of New England, Armidale NSW, and the author of *Christopher Dawson: A Biographical Introduction* (Christopher Dawson Centre for Cultural Studies, Hobart, 2014; rev. ed, 2022). This article is an edited version of his larger history of the emerging years of Campion College, due to be published in 2023.

When I moved to the rural NSW city of Armidale in 1970, as a librarian at the University of New England, I picked out a hilltop site where a Catholic liberal arts college could be built. I started to rehearse Dawson's Christian culture program by offering home-based courses to the local university students. Yet it was not in Armidale but in Sydney – and not until 2006 – that the college was to materialise.

A second factor of importance was the institutional models of Catholic liberal arts colleges in the United States. These institutions are part of a larger American tradition of liberal arts education at the undergraduate level, which has provided an intellectual and cultural foundation for an array of vocational pathways. The Catholic colleges had the additional element of faith as well as reason, so that it could be faithful to the fullness of the Catholic intellectual tradition, though this teaching of transcendental wisdom was disrupted by the cultural and religious upheavals of the 1960s.

In the 1970s, several new Catholic liberal arts colleges emerged in reaction to these changes – notably, Christendom College in Virginia, and Thomas Aquinas College and the University of San Francisco's St Ignatius Institute in California. I was alerted to these institutions in 1977 when I spent three months in America on a Fulbright Scholarship visiting academic libraries. The experience enabled me to appreciate the value of a first degree in the liberal arts as a preparation for life and a precursor to professional and other vocational studies.

Campion founders and a Carmelite nun

Yet the vision of a Catholic liberal arts college depended on more than inspirational ideas or institutional models. It was only rendered feasible when, soon after I returned from America, I came to know James Power Senior. This meeting with an experienced Catholic businessman, whose family owned and operated pubs in Queensland, was the vital personal factor in the birth of Campion College. It came about improbably – but in retrospect, providentially – as a result of our both knowing an enclosed nun, Mother Mary Veronica, Prioress of the Carmelite Monastery in the Brisbane suburb of Ormiston.

Mother Veronica was aware of my desire to establish a Catholic liberal arts college in Australia. At some point she asked James, on one of his visits to Ormiston, if he knew me. He said 'no', though mentioned that he had come across some of my newspaper articles and pamphlets. Mother Veronica suggested that James contact me, as she thought we would have much in common and that he would be interested in my plans for a Catholic liberal arts institution in Australia. James phoned, and we

met soon afterwards in Brisbane. It was the beginning of a lifetime friendship – and an extraordinarily fruitful partnership.

Soon after we met, I introduced James to the John XXIII Fellowship. This association had been founded by a group of young Catholics, including myself, in 1972. Its annual conferences provided a suitable setting for the preparation of Campion College. They afforded an opportunity for the discussion of Catholic life and learning in contemporary Australia, and for the rehearsal of various ideas – in areas like education, media, politics and literature – that might find new expression in a culture that was rapidly de-Christianising, spiritually and intellectually, and beginning to unravel, socially and politically.

A sharp contrast existed between the liberal arts initiatives that took place in Australia and America in the late 20th century. In the United States they were mainly led by university academics at the centre of higher education, not by those in a supporting role (such as an administrator or a librarian) or those unconnected with the university sector (such as a businessman). By contrast, Campion was a distinctively Australian phenomenon. It relied on an unusual mix of the imaginative and the practical, expressed in a creative collaboration between two unlikely friends, a businessman, James, and myself, a librarian. Each brought to the project different but complementary backgrounds and skills. I was fortunate in knowing universities from the inside, having the organisational and historical knowledge, and a range of academic and professional contacts, required to establish a new university. James had the entrepreneurial drive, the business acumen and resources, and an outlook of risk-taking, to realise such a project. As friends, we each respected and relied upon the other's contributions.

Among the practical factors that contributed to the development of Campion as private and independent, James' generosity in supplying the seed capital required was decisive. Of supplementary value was my experience in university fund-raising, both in Australia and America, which helped to ensure that the emerging institution would not be dependent on a single donor but appeal to a wider constituency.

The project also benefitted from a new attitude of political openness being shown to non-government higher education. The clearest sign of this new sympathy was the Federal Government decision in 2005, on the part of the Liberal-National Party coalition, to extend to students at private universities and colleges the HECS-HELP loan scheme introduced by the earlier Labor government for those attending public institutions. FEE-HELP, as it was called, was less advantageous for private students, in that it was not subsidised by the government and applied to institutions

which remained free to set their own fees. But its timing was critical for Campion College, as it was introduced in the very year the College opened.

Underlying these practical contributions lay a deep unity of purpose and resolve. James and I shared a Catholic vision of faith and education for modern Australia. From the outset Campion was conceived as a lay initiative, rather than an institutional undertaking, for the purpose of Christian education and evangelization. Thus it was not an enterprise subject to the conventional criteria of success. It was inspired by a higher calling – our common Catholic convictions – and animated by a passion for learning that found in the liberal arts an enriching blend of faith and reason, which might be put at the service of Australian society in the 21st century.

Lack of Australian models and precedents

Yet the Campion project was always a long shot. Australia lacked models and precedents.

In the first place, there was no tradition of liberal arts colleges. While the older universities, such as Sydney and Melbourne, offered humanities degrees that included liberal arts courses, in areas such as philosophy, history and the classical languages, they did not teach them as a coherent and integrated program. Moreover, the omission of theology meant that no serious study was attempted of spiritual and transcendental reality, and no readiness shown to admit faith into a conversation with reason as the channel and culmination of higher learning and human wisdom.

In the second place, there was no Australian tradition of private universities which Campion could invoke as a model. Universities were all established and funded by government. Any private tertiary colleges emerged from professional or vocational bodies, or else had been founded for a directly religious purpose such as seminaries.

In the third place, Campion could not rely on religious models for its tertiary development. The Churches in Australia, Catholic and Protestant, had not been notably active at the university level. The extensive creation of religious schools at the primary and secondary levels had not been matched by the founding of religious universities or colleges. The Churches had been historically enterprising in this way in Europe and America, but their impact on higher education in Australia had been largely confined to the founding of student residential colleges at public universities.

These background factors were critical in confirming a decision on the right institutional space for Campion College. The long-standing preference that James and I shared was for a discrete institution. The reasons were, firstly, the

religious character of Campion, which would be virtually impossible to promote and safeguard in the ingrainedly secular setting of any Australian university; and secondly, Campion's educational program, with its chronological and cultural progression, from ancient to modern times, which would be difficult to position in an academic culture where the liberal arts were already languishing, and courses were largely designed in response to the diverse research interests of academic staff.

A new and separate institution was also the path followed by the newer Catholic liberal arts colleges in America. It offered the best guarantee of intellectual freedom and curricular independence, as well as openness to students who were not Catholic or even Christian.

Yet the very lack of established reference points and historical precedents in Australia had a paradoxical advantage. It highlighted an overlooked need, and a silent opportunity, for a Catholic liberal arts college. Campion would strive to fulfil a neglected educational purpose, offering a broad program of core subjects as a time-proven foundation for further study or various career choices. It would challenge the prevailing preference of confining students at an early – and often premature – stage to a vocational path.

It would also be a social and political assertion of religious freedom and educational difference. It could serve as a new model for the strengthening of secular identity in Australia - by providing the culture with the crucial ingredient of an uplifting and unifying educational purpose.

Campion would hopefully help to prepare Catholics and other believers to deal with the culture in which Australians now lived – religiously disenchanted but spiritually hungry, intellectually searching but historically alienated, which was resulting in the erosion of cultural habits and celebrations as well as artistic creativity.

If there were to be a new opening to the ultimate understandings of reality and destiny offered by the Christian faith, an answer had to be supplied to the frustrations of present-day culture – the constricted and confused natural understandings it offered, and the supernatural longings it ignored. The hope was that Campion would be a part of that answer.

Building the foundations

From the outset the Campion project relied on the building of the essential foundations – the location and infrastructure of a campus, the construction of a library and technology framework, the nurturing of a new support base (threefold in nature,

covering donors, potential students and their families, and committed members of governing and fund-raising bodies), and the design and formal authorisation of new academic programs.

These challenges had to be addressed in unison as they were interdependent. The selection of a campus and the building of a library, for example, were needed to establish the initial credibility of the College, as well as to prepare for its formal justification as a higher education institution; while the development of a mailing database was a necessary platform for effective fund-raising as well as marketing and student recruitment.

Overarching them all was the appointment of staff – in the first instance, to complete the detailed planning and implementation of the project, and then to write the courses that had been accredited for teaching and develop the service units in key areas, such as the library and student support.

In mid-2000, James and I embarked in earnest on the project. I was, as a result of James' generosity, able to leave my position as University Librarian at the University of New England and begin full-time on planning the development of Campion College and assembling the foundations.

The first building block was the location of a campus. Initially we explored areas outside of Sydney, on the NSW Central Coast and the Southern Highlands, but finally settled on a more conveniently placed campus in Sydney.

We were offered by the Bishop of Parramatta, Kevin Manning, a 4-hectare site in the western suburb of Toongabbie, which had previously served as a Marist Fathers' seminary and was later acquired by the Parramatta Diocese.

The campus proved to be ideal. It contained the essential infrastructure for a Catholic university college – lecture and tutorial rooms, accommodation and catering facilities for students, a chapel and a library. All these facilities were centrally located in a large building, extended in the 1950s and supported by various temporary structures. For additional room, the Diocese had refurbished a house on the edge of the campus, originally for retired priests, which would be available for student accommodation.

Connecting with Potential Supporters

A second building block was the cultivation of a significant support base – of benefactors, on the one hand, and future students and their families, on the other.

While there was some overlap of these key groups, they were also distinct, at least in terms of age profile. The most likely donors were those above 50 years

of age – in many cases retired and, in time, possible bequestors – while potential students were most likely to come from younger families with children in senior high school contemplating university options.

An outstanding example of an early donor to Campion was Bishop James Bromley, of Toronto NSW, who was the leader of the Traditional Anglican Church. Bishop Bromley left the College a major bequest (including his own church and adjacent house in Toronto and a large apartment block that was a family inheritance in Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley).

At the same time, the College depended on a fundamental source of ordinary, not wealthy, support. The most touching donation received in the early years was a \$5 note taped to a donation flyer, with an inscribed message, unsigned, in the spidery writing style of an almost certainly elderly person: “I hope this helps. I pray for the College.” Such a generous gift was unmistakably spiritual as well as material. It was for Campion a re-enactment of the widow’s mite (Mark 12: 41-44), when Christ exalted the widow for giving out of her poverty, not her wealth.

The process of alerting potential supporters to the future College began in May 2002 with the launching of a 4-page newsletter, *Campion’s Brag*, containing the subtitle, ‘Catholic Learning in the Liberal Arts’. At first it appeared twice yearly, and from 2004, quarterly. The name was drawn from the title of St Edmund Campion’s manifesto of his English mission in 1580, when as a Jesuit priest he brought spiritual comfort and sustenance to the Catholic people suffering persecution under the newly Protestantised state of Queen Elizabeth I.

But the title of *Campion’s Brag* not only honoured the sacrificial legacy of Campion (who was martyred in 1581). As a disparaging tag bestowed by his enemies, it had a cheekily Australian ring to it as well. The *Brag* in 16th century England contained a ‘call to action’ presented by St Edmund Campion. It now translated, five centuries later, into a different era, to inspire an educational venture in faraway Australia.

A feature of the early *Brag*s was a range of endorsements from public figures, ecclesiastical and lay, who could lend credibility to the project by highlighting its broad educational and social value. The two we favoured in particular were Cardinal George Pell and Sir Peter Cosgrove. James knew Cardinal Pell, who even then was the most prominent Catholic leader in Australia, having just been appointed Archbishop of Sydney after serving as Archbishop of Melbourne, and prior to his appointment as a Cardinal. He responded immediately, providing a public statement for the *Brag* which described the future college as “a novel and

exciting prospect” and affirmed its cultural importance for “those who understand and love Christian humanism”.

I happened to know Sir Peter Cosgrove from our schooldays together at Waverley College in Sydney in the 1960s. At the time of the first *Brag* in 2002 he was Chief of the Australian Army – and shortly to become Chief of the entire Defence Force – following the international peacekeeping mission he had led in East Timor in 1999. Peter, too, was enthusiastic in his support for Campion – in his words, “embodying as it does the notion of Catholic people fortifying and exploring their faith, and balancing as it does those many secular tertiary institutions of our society.”

Designing a Curriculum

A third building block was the design of a liberal arts program that would be acceptable in Australian conditions. A guiding principle was to establish a balance between intellectual inspiration and teaching practicality. The program needed to convey a vision of transcendental meaning and purpose, drawn from the long historical experience of a people whose lives were decisively changed by the coming of Christ – the direct insertion of God into human history in a unique and unmistakable way. It had to open students’ minds and hearts to a rich heritage of learning and cultural experience –embodied in the books, in Matthew Arnold’s famous words, that present “the best which has been thought and said”. Australian students were unlikely to have received access in their secondary education to this heritage, certainly in a coherent and systematic way.

At the same time, the Campion vision was to go beyond the “Great Books”, so that students could be immersed in a culture vitally influenced by the Christian faith, and productive of many “good books” as well as “Great Books”; not just an idea or an attitude, or even a conviction, but the concrete way of life of a people.

The Campion program would be designed and taught as a core curriculum. This plan made clear its character as foundational – the essence of an undergraduate degree, prior to any progression to more specialised studies at the post-graduate level. A core curriculum carried intellectual authority, as it comprised the necessary knowledge for students to master for an understanding of their own culture – before they might move on later to appreciate and understand other cultures. By contrast, the standard undergraduate degree in Australia was an educational smorgasbord – a mass of miscellaneous courses that lacked any principle of intellectual unity or cultural integrity. A core curriculum had to be designed to give students a set of fundamental subjects, studied from ancient to modern times, which would reveal the life of an historical people as a coherent cultural story.

The academic program would seek to bring the light of faith and reason into the experience of learning – to illuminate the traditions that shaped Western civilisation, including in those lands, like Australia, that were part of the Western inheritance.

At the same time, the Campion program had to be realistic. It needed to respond to present-day aspirations in Australia – while hoping to lift and extend them – so that students would be prepared to undertake such a program, and donors to sponsor it. It had to accommodate students' – and parents' – expectation that it would be a suitable preparation for the workplace and social participation, and not a frivolous distraction or a post-school diversion.

The central aim of the curriculum would be to study the unfolding of Western civilization – in history, philosophy, theology, and literature, with the additional subjects of language (Latin and Classical Greek), science, and mathematics offered for part of the program. Students would receive an integrated understanding of reality through various lenses – of history, as the lived experience of a people; philosophy, as the ideas that animated and guided their way of life; literature, as the imagination engaging with reality to enliven and deepen our understanding; and theology, as our relationship with God and the transcendent that raises our appreciation of reality, and injects it with ultimate meaning and purpose and fulfilment. The goal would not simply be the transmission of knowledge, but rather the immersion in a culture, formed from historical memories and insights, and vitalized and unified, in a dynamic tension, by the Christian vision.

The foundational subjects would be taught so as to cultivate the art of thinking – not just critical thinking, as though criticism were an end in itself, but with a positive end in mind, to deepen and sharpen the realization of truth. The courses would be organized in a chronological sequence, from ancient to modern times, so as to present a picture of context and sequence, while fostering an integrated understanding of cultural experience.

I took responsibility for designing the initial program, drawing on the Christian culture courses outlined in an appendix to Christopher Dawson's *Crisis of Western Education*, as well as on the structure and design of the curriculum of Christendom College. The first year courses would cover the ancient world; the second year, the Middle Ages; the third year, the modern era. The core subjects – of history, philosophy, theology, and literature – would be studied against a common cultural background.

The program was broad, but it could not be superficial. It had to combine depth with breadth, devising ways of injecting intellectual substance and unity into the

comprehensive span of the program. There would be various points of opportunity. In the second year course on Medieval Literature, for example, Dante's *Divine Comedy* would be studied as a supreme work of poetic imagination, while also revealing Dante's insights into medieval philosophy, especially the thought of St Thomas Aquinas, and his historical vision that fused the ideas and figures of pagan antiquity with those of the Christian world. In a third year science unit, "The History, Philosophy and Social Study of Science", Campion students could examine the emergence of modern science – from a Western culture cradled in Christian ideas about the order of nature and the intelligence of created things. The roots of science and technology would be seen, not only as physical, but also metaphysical, bearing intellectual and religious meanings.

Only a true liberal arts course, imbued with a vision of faith and reason, could bring together these varied threads – of philosophic thought, theological penetration, and literary intuition, as well as the history of social conditions, so as to shed light on the scientific impulses behind the vast developments of the industrial and technological eras.

Appointing the Staff

A formidable challenge for the College – and its fourth building block – was the appointment of staff; in particular, finding a suitable leader for the College, and then lecturers who could teach a Catholic liberal arts program at the undergraduate level.

The initial appointments were of the critical positions of College President and Registrar. These called for an unusual blend of qualities – on account of the unusual nature of Campion: a university-level institution, born of Catholic inspiration but open to all, independently run and privately funded, and having as its core program a general undergraduate degree in the liberal arts. Any of these attributes could have been calculated to limit the potential field in Australia.

The President's position was especially challenging. The capacity of the new college, as well as its public credibility, rested on an inaugural leader whose qualities would be manifold. In the first half of 2004, Rev Dr John Fleming, a priest-scholar from Adelaide, with extensive experience in church agencies and secular media, was appointed as President. Soon afterwards, Mr Tony Heywood, an experienced university administrator from Sydney, with a background in policy planning and campus development and management, took up the role of Registrar.

The next appointments were of the academic staff who would deliver the

program. Some of the prerequisites for the President applied as well to the faculty, such as an appreciation of the liberal arts and the Catholic intellectual tradition. But an additional requirement was the desire – and the ability – to teach a curriculum that was broad and integrated. Lecturers were needed who would be willing to present courses in this educational form – and, moreover, in a new and independent institution, with no guarantee of survival or promise of job security. The challenge was acute in Australia, given the specialised focus of modern academic work, the common preference for research over teaching – especially the teaching of undergraduates – and the lack of precedents of non-government tertiary institutions.

In early 2005, advertisements were placed for the inaugural teaching positions – in the core subjects of History, Literature, Philosophy and Theology.

The initial appointment was that of Dr Sandy Lynch as Lecturer in Philosophy, who would later become Dean of the College. Sandy brought experience in teaching at both the secondary and tertiary levels. She offered the College another important ingredient – an academic background in America as well as in Australia, which had fostered her love of philosophy in an historical context, and imparted insight into the structured, chronological approach of the Campion degree.

A second appointment was that of Dr Luciano Boschiero as Lecturer in History. His research background was in the history of science, which was of value in exemplifying the intellectual and educational qualities of the liberal arts. Such a history bridged the ages of scientific thinking - ancient, medieval, modern – in a way that demonstrated the synthesising thrust of the Campion academic program.

Stephen McInerney became the College's third appointment – as Lecturer in Literature. Like Luciano, Stephen had recently completed a PhD. A published poet, he brought to the position a literary sensibility informed by historical knowledge and philosophical insight.

The fourth faculty member was Fr Luke Holohan as Lecturer in Theology. As a priest, he embodied the vocation of theology in the most sacramental way. While Campion was an initiative of lay Catholics, it was important that the religious and intellectual witness – and incarnation – of the Catholic priesthood be unmistakably present in the life of the College. As a Marist priest, Fr Holohan connected Campion with its Australian Catholic heritage, the traditions of the Toongabbie campus where the Marist Fathers had founded a seminary in 1938, and where Campion was about to open a new chapter of Catholic higher education in Australia.

The College's link with the Marist Fathers was not only historical. It was also intellectual and religious. In an exquisite sign of divine symmetry, the first Rector of

the Marist Seminary at Toongabbie was Austin Woodbury SM (1899-1979), founder of the Aquinas Academy in Sydney. In certain ways the Academy foreshadowed Campion's emergence as an initiative in lay rather than clerical education. It gave lay Catholics the opportunity of studying a systematic program of philosophical education in their faith. Fr Holohan's appointment also allowed for the crucial role of a College chaplaincy, which could be combined with his academic role, or serve as a supplement to it.

Building a Library

A fifth building block was the development of a library. The advent of electronic scholarly resources suggested a reduced reliance on printed material. Certainly the new information technologies proved a boon in the key area of journals. By their nature, periodical literature comprises individual articles by different authors on disparate topics, which are conducive to electronic retrieval by defined search terms. For Campion, this meant that the emerging library could embrace electronic access to relevant academic journals, thereby avoiding the complexity of managing individual subscriptions as well as the large-scale acquisition of printed back-sets, both of which would have involved purchasing and binding costs as well as the provision of shelving space.

At the same time, electronic formats were not a simple substitute for printed books. The guiding principle was to choose library materials most in harmony with the intellectual character of the liberal arts. The breadth and richness of a book collection, conducive to undirected browsing as well as focused subject or author searching, reflected the broad and integrated nature of the intended program. Such a collection lent itself to exploration as well as targeted use, and resonated most fully with the roaming and synthesising opportunities of a liberal arts program.

Two formed book collections became available as a result of closed seminaries. The first was the library of the Dominican Priory in Canberra. It contained 17,000 volumes in most of the core subjects in the proposed Campion degree – namely, philosophy and theology and to a lesser extent, history and literature. The Dominican Fathers agreed to transfer the library, recognising that it would remain largely intact and be placed in the service of a new Catholic educational institution.

Later in 2004, another library became available. Paul Stenhouse, a well-known priest of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) and Editor of Australia's oldest Catholic journal *Annals*, alerted me to the availability of a collection of 8,000 volumes located at the MSC monastery in Kensington NSW where he resided. Fr

Stenhouse was a supporter of the Campion project from its earliest days, and alive to the importance of a suitable library to support the new institution's program. The collection he identified had served for more than a century as a seminary library,



From left: Rev. Dr John Fleming, Campion College President; Joe de Bruyn, Chairman of the Campion Institute Board; James Power Senior, Founding Fellow; Karl Schmude, Founding Fellow; Bishop Julian Porteous of Archdiocese of Sydney (representing Cardinal Pell), at the official opening of Campion College on Friday, 24 March 2006, when the Board Chairman conferred the award of Founding Fellows on James Power Senior and Karl Schmude.



The main building of Campion College in Toongabbie, which originally served the Marist Seminary, the first rector of which was Rev. Dr Austin Woodbury SM (1899–1979) from 1938 to 1943. The statue of St Edmund Campion (right) was sculpted in Sydney and erected in 2010 by the College in honour of its patron saint.

at the library was established in the Melbourne suburb of Croydon in 1939 and moved to Drummoyne in Sydney in 1985, and finally to the MSC Monastery in Kensington after the seminary closed. The MSC Order was prepared to sell the collection, and, as with the Dominican library, the Callanan Foundation's generous support made the purchase possible.

Securing Accreditation

A sixth building block was gaining authority to confer degrees. While the College did not seek government funding for its operation, so as to avoid political pressure and distraction as well as bureaucratic regulation, there was always a recognition of the necessity of government approval and formal accreditation.

The College adopted a dual operational structure, creating the Campion Foundation to focus on financial matters – fund-raising and asset management – and the Campion Institute to be responsible for institutional governance.

Each body called for a balance of backgrounds and skills in harmony with the nature of the new college. Directors on the Foundation Board needed financial investment expertise and a knowledge of potential donors, while the Institute Board would benefit from budgetary management and policy experience, preferably in higher education, and an understanding of bureaucratic processes and political realities, especially during the process of accreditation.

A pivotal member of both bodies was James Power Jr, who, as the son of James Sr, provided a direct family link with the co-founder of the College. He brought a deep understanding of Campion's nature and its importance for the Church and for Australia, while also offering extensive business expertise in such areas as finance, marketing and media. A second leading member was Joe de Bruyn, a prominent trade-union leader noted for his courage and steadfastness in defending Christian principles in Australian public life. He served as the inaugural Chairman of both the Foundation and the Institute Boards, and skilfully steered the College through the challenging years of its early development.

The College Opens

The official opening of the College took place on Friday, March 24, 2006, at the Toongabbie campus. The occasion began with Mass, which was not only reflective of the College's Catholic inspiration but also foreshadowed the practice followed at the College's Graduation ceremonies beginning in 2008.

The following years, after the College began, were to test – but also realise in remarkable ways – the high hopes celebrated at these two events in 2006. The most

immediate sign of this fulfilment was the inaugural class at Campion – sixteen brave students, supported by their families, who placed their faith in a new institution, unsure of whether it would survive even long enough to award them degrees after three years.

THE STORY OF ST MARY'S SPIRES – THE COMPLETION OF POLDING'S PROGRAM

Tony Doherty*

There are two people for whom I would like to dedicate this talk:

Ralph Morris – who worked 60/80 hours a week on this project, without whom the task would have been less possible.

John Ferris – Miller Milstead and Ferris – Chairman of SMC Works Committee

It has been written somewhere – the true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit. There are three visionaries whose names are inscribed in this Cathedral who never lived to see their dream completed.

1. An Irishman from Cork, John Joseph Therry one of the first two officially appointed priests to Sydney town.
2. An Englishman from Liverpool, John Bede Polding, the first Archbishop of the colony.
3. An Englishman from London, William Wilkinson Wardell, the architect of the Cathedral.

Such was their greatness.

To begin allow me to draw a simple timeline for the construction of this building.

a) St Marys was built in three stages: the Northern sanctuary and nave was completed in September 1882 (a more formal opening 1900): the Southern nave was opened in September 1928; the Wardell Spires were completed on June 21, 2000.

Sydney is referred to as the lion coloured city. The very foundation of the city is built upon quite a distinctive sandstone, highly desirable to architects for a number of reasons one of which is that it is easily carveable. The Cathedral sandstone was sourced from three locations. The original stage from Pyrmont; the southern nave from North Bondi and the spires from Gosford.

The question that is frequently asked is why were the spires not completed in 1928. The common belief is that the Archdiocese ran out of funds. Tourist coach drivers passing the cathedral seem to have a firmly held opinion that their construction was deliberately delayed because a completed Cathedral would be required to pay a

* Monsignor Tony Doherty is a former Dean of St Mary's Cathedral (Sydney) and co-author of *The Attachment*. This talk was given to the ACHS on 20 November 2022.

tax to the Vatican. This colourful opinion has no basis in history. My own personal opinion is that the Cathedral authorities ran out of time. This is based upon two pieces of evidence.



Medal from the International Eucharist Congress with St Mary's Cathedral showing non-existent spires, 1928. From the collections of the State Library of New South Wales (Mitchell Library)

First, a lapel button commemorating the 1928 Eucharistic Congress displays the Cathedral complete with spires, indicating that sometime earlier in 1928 it was intended to finish the original Wardell design. Secondly, there is evidence in the stone fretwork of the main southern portal that the work of the stonemasons had been abruptly interrupted to make way for the beginning of the celebrations of the Cathedral opening and the beginning of the Eucharistic Congress. Not conclusive evidence, no doubt, but leaves an interesting speculation.

My appointment to the Cathedral began in June 1995. The task at that time was a major

conservation of a building sorely in need of repair. The NSW Government became a senior consultant and something of a partner in this task. A broad Conservation Plan had been drawn up which had been the work of the first part of 1995. The creators of this Plan were invited to not limit their thinking to immediate needs but to consider an imagined future. Documents were drawn up and a three dimensional model was constructed which included the closure of Boomerang Street, the inclusion of a Cathedral square, and the completion of the Wardell spires. These last three possibilities were future dreams rather than the task we envisaged in 1995. Over the next five years, the Sydney City Council responded to the suggestion of closing the busy artery which was Boomerang Street (it was envisaged that the Cathedral was an isolated island part surrounded by busy traffic); then the building of a gathering

space in front of the cathedral (under which would be placed a large car park and aquatic centre). In late 1998 a decision to proceed with the construction of the Wardell Spires was made. The NSW Government provided some financial support on the condition that they are constructed before the Sydney Olympics opening in September 2000.

To provide some context for the construction of the Spires allow me to share three stories.

- the search for funds;
- the tender process;
- the demands of seismic reinforcement

a. Search for Funds.

The State Premier Bob Carr was approached by Cardinal Clancy on the visit of the Dalai Lama to Sydney in 1999. In conversation the Premier made an informal comment about releasing 5 million dollars. Later provided the condition that they be in position before Sydney Olympics. (The Cathedral would be a significant photographic image for the route of four of the Olympic events - the Triathlon and the Marathon for both Women and Men.

A meeting was held in Premiers office in the company of ten other interested Public Service chiefs — NSW Architect; State Projects and others. Premier Carr spoke at length and claimed that no matter how important the project was for Sydney – there were NO funds available to assist the Cathedral. However, in the last sentence of the fifteen minute speech, the Premier conceded the decision was in the last instance up to the NSW Treasurer.

We received \$5 million within two weeks. The Cathedral Conservation Fund raising Committee headed by Commonwealth Bank's CEO David Murray raised the remaining \$5 million.

b. The Tender process

For the Spires, this attracted about ten interested parties, including most of the biggest building corporations in Australia.

The tender was won by perhaps the smallest applicant, but who proposed the most creative solution.

Working at a considerable height and the necessity of bringing men and materials into place, all of the tenderers except one suggested placing a crane in College St for the duration of the work. Waller Brothers came up with an ingenious alternative. A mechanical lift would be attached to the outside wall of the western tower. Steel frames which would provide the basis of each spire would be fabricated off-site,

and when the time came would be lifted into place by a large heavy duty Russian helicopter. When these steel modules were bolted into place they would provide a base for a self-craning solution. This solution had several attractive features: it would eliminate an inconvenient interruption to traffic on College Street; the work site would be more manageable, and the cost would be reduced by about one million dollars.

Waller Brothers won the tender, I believe, because of another reason. Trevor Waters, a trained architect and master builder, would manage the project. His total knowledge of the architectural details, the history of St Marys and the building principals which guided the construction of medieval Cathedrals was extremely impressive. His total dedication to the task during the work and care for detail proved the decision to employ this company to be the right one.

Waller Brothers brought the construction to a very satisfying conclusion. The spires were dedicated on June 21, 2000. The contract on time and 5% under budget.

An interesting connection between the Sydney Opera House and the Cathedral Spires is that Trevor Waters had a role as a young man in the 'Peter Hall' stage of the completion of the Opera House. As did John Ferris (Chair of the Works committee) as a partner of the Engineering firm of Miller, Milsted and Ferris.

c. The issue of Seismic reinforcement.

As an outcome of the 1989 Newcastle Earthquake, requirement for seismic reinforcement of high rise buildings were tightened by the State Government. This led to a series of meetings with NSW Government Public Works seeking a solution to the construction of the Cathedral Spires and how they could be strengthened.

The Government recommendation was to insert 4 steel rods in the corner of each of the two towers (which were the base of the spires) which would mean 32 rods drilled through the sandstone walls down to ground level. This solution was resisted strenuously by the Cathedral Works Committee particularly by its Chairman John Ferris a senior member of the Sydney engineering community. The conversation extended over four strongly argued weeks. The Ferris solution finally won the day which was to position transverse steel beams within the tower void thus strengthening the walls and providing the reinforcement necessary for any future contingency. Thus eliminating any necessity to drill through 32 metres of fragile sandstone with the all of the high risk of permanent damage being caused.



Helicopter installation of finial on new spires, St Mary's Cathedral, College Street Sydney, 2000. Photographer: Tim Cole. (A-00047689) City of Sydney Archives.

The construction.

The lowering of the steel pre-fabricated frames – four in each spire – by Russian Helicopter provided the Saturday afternoon entertainment for spectators gathered in Hyde Park and other vintage spots around the city. The biggest media outlets in TV and print regarded this event as the headline of the day. The State Premier, Cardinal Clancy, senior members of State Projects, significant donors and members of the clergy and Federal and State parliaments were invited to view the aerial display from the top floor of the Australian Museum in College Street, providing a dress circle viewing of the dramatic display.

Teams of riggers were harnessed safely to the fabricated units. As each piece was lowered with pin-point accuracy, an engineer in the helicopter using a technology designed at other times for the aiming of bombs, carefully positioned each large frame. The matching of bolt holes in each unit allowed zero room for error. The riggers would then shackle the units one to another, all carried out with the whirling blades of a helicopter above them. As the sun set on that Saturday evening there remained one last unit to be put into place. The plan was adjusted to position the remaining unit on the Sunday morning. A narrow window of time existed between the 9.30 and 10.30 so that the normal worship programme could be maintained in the Cathedral. While the overhead work was in play worshippers could not approach the Cathedral for obvious safety reasons. Despite a black, surly looking

thunderstorm fast approaching from the south, the task was happily completed with military precision and only seconds to spare. A dramatic finale to a memorable event in the Cathedral's long history.

Two bronze crosses

To excite interest among the wider community the two Crosses designed to be placed on each pinnacles, were placed on benches and open display in the Cathedral square. Passers-by were invited to take a few minutes to polish the bronze crosses. Hundred of casual passers-by queued up to take their turn to provide a polish of one of the crosses. The imaginative idea created much interest and not a little excitement.

Lebanese Muslim labourers

A team of steel fabricators were employed in the the spires construction. Six or eight of them were of the Islamic faith who each day took time for the ritual of prayer on the cathedral site. Prayer mats were laid in the workers huts and the usual Islamic hour of prayer were carefully observed. These rituals would be carried out about ten metres away from where Fr Therry and Governor Lachlan Macquarie would lay the foundation stone for the first St Marys Cathedral back in 1821.

Honey of St Mary's

A bee hive was discovered early in the construction in a high niche within the western tower. The bees were safely transported to a new hive in the Western Suburbs and the honey was taken from it and attractively bottled and offered as a fundraising exercise. One of these bottles was sent as a gift to Pope John Paul 11, which I piously trust was sitting on his breakfast table next to the toast.

Allow me to conclude with a story of an historic feature within this sacred building.

Two McGowen brothers gifted the Cathedral with our 300 carved images on top of the internal columns. These images were of many traditional saints in the two thousand year history of the church. Some are instantly recognisable but many difficult or impossible to identify. For those of us who have enjoyed the privilege of ministering in this place its hard to resist seeing in them a reminder of the people, more often than not nameless, who come quietly to sit in these pews to reflect on their own life journey with all the inevitable joys and hopes, anxieties and dilemmas.

Notable souls spring to mind.

Mary MacKillop coming across the harbour from North Sydney in a ferry, walking up from the Quay, along Macquarie Street to the Cathedral.

Christopher Brennan, poet, in the years of struggle with his own demons, sitting in a corner of the Cathedral quietly giving birth to language and images of beauty and wisdom;

The young Les Darcy arriving at the King St wharf and calling into the Cathedral on his way to fight at the Rushcutters Bay Stadium; or big Bill O'Reilly on his way to the SCG to do battle with the Poms.

Jack Lang dreaming of a land where justice would be more evenly shared by all.

Or the tiny figure of Eileen O'Connor, the heroic founder of the Brown Nurses, dead at 28, leaving her signature of compassion and humanness on this sometimes harsh and friendless city.

Then there was Sgt Stan Arneil, dreaming of St Mary's and his beloved Sydney harbour, carefully recorded in a precious diary one Good Friday, while a prisoner in the hell hole called Changi.

Or even more recently Mick Young, Des Renford, Victor Chang, Fred Hollows, Senator Susan Ryan whose lives and farewell were celebrated and honoured in this church.

Those wonderful carved faces remind us of them all, and thousands of others like them, though anonymous, perhaps even forgotten. Their stories canonise the sacredness of this holy place.

Conclusion

One hundred and thirty two years before this completion of the Cathedral Spires the first Archbishop of Sydney John Bede Polding composed a letter to the Catholic community in this young town. He found these words to describe his dream for this Cathedral and this day.

***'And so the happy tradition,
the innocent boast will go until the whole immense plan shall be covered,
the permanent roof placed, the topmost stone of its spires raised aloft
charged with the figure of the Holy Cross, the sacred symbol of our faith,
which is the foundation, the progress,
the completion of every good and beautiful Christian work.'***

Pastoral letter of John Bede Polding (September 1868) on the occasion of laying of the foundation stone.

WALKING THE SYNODAL PATH OF THE FIFTH PLENARY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA – A REFLECTION

Helen Belcher*

Introduction

This paper is a reflection on my experience as a member of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – my story. It is not an historical or theological paper. Having said that I acknowledge that some readers may not be conversant with the Plenary Council so the paper starts with an explanation of what and how it happened before finishing with my reflections.

The paper follows this format.

1. Why have a Plenary Council?
2. What is synodality?
3. How does a Synod differ from a Plenary Council?
4. Plenary Council – the journey
 - Preparation
 - Phase I: Listening and Dialogue
 - Phase II: Listening and Discernment
 - Celebration
 - First Assembly
 - Second Assembly
 - Implementation
5. Reflections on the process
6. Was the Plenary Council a Success – pluses and challenges
7. Final words

Why have a plenary council?

The last Plenary Council in Australia was held in 1937, more than eighty years ago.¹ The Fifth Plenary Council differs from these earlier Councils insofar as it included the laity, especially lay women in its deliberations. Together with religious women, women comprised approximately a third of the membership. The Council was also unique as it embarked on a lengthy listening and dialogue process to hear the voices of Australians.¹

The urgency of the task facing the Church in the world has been a constant

¹ Dantis, T. et.al, 2019, pp. 1–2; Wilkinson, P. 2017

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theme in the papacy of Pope Francis. His call is to engage in the world and respond in faith.

The defining aspect of this change of epoch is that things are no longer in their place. Our previous ways of explaining the world and relationships, good and bad, no longer appears to work.

The way in which we locate ourselves in history has changed. Things we thought would never happen, or that we never thought we would see, we are experiencing now, and we dare not even imagine the future. That which appeared normal to us – family, the Church, society and the world – will probably no longer seem that way. We cannot simply wait for what we are experiencing to pass, under the illusion that things will return to being how they were before.² Changes in contemporary Australia, and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, provided added impetus to heed Francis's call to not simply wait, but to act. As Archbishop Mark Coleridge noted

the Church is not the presence in our society it once was. We need to take a measure of that and make decisions accordingly. The culture in which we have to proclaim the Gospel is very different to what it was even 20 or 30 years ago.³

Thus the Church in Australia committed to a journey taking place over several years to allow the Catholic community in Australia time to listen, dialogue and discern with one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit what God was asking of us.

The Fifth Plenary Council then was called

- as a response to Pope Francis's invitation for the local Church to dialogue;
- to address the significant changes in contemporary society;
- to listen to and respond to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual;

and

- to dialogue about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. Its purpose was to
- listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and
- listen to members of the Church in Australia to discern God's call.

Importantly, the Council was established and developed as a synodal journey – the

2 Francis, in *History and Theology – Plenary Council*
<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/history/>

3 Coleridge, M., in *Frequently Asked Questions – Plenary Council*
<https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/frequently-asked-questions/>

People of God travelling together not as a one-off assembly but a journey covering a considerable time span that began in 2012 with the Year of Grace. Whilst this year explored the need for a national gathering the actual decision was not made until May 2016 and ratified by Pope Francis on 19th March 2018. The Council itself was launched on the feast of Pentecost 2020 and officially convoked on the feast of Pentecost 2021 formally concluding in July 2022.

What is synodality?

Pope Francis – drawing upon tradition and Vatican II – places great emphasis on synodality. He argues

- *it is a constitutive element of the Church, to be found at all levels of church life.*⁴ and
- *the Church is either synodal or it is not Church.*⁵

Francis continually underlines the importance of mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn, the laity, the bishops, the pope: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, in order to know what God is saying to the Church.⁶⁶

How does a synod differ from a plenary council?

A synod is a gathering – traditionally of bishops. The word comes from the Greek syn-hodos meaning the ‘same way’ or the ‘same path’.⁷

There is a long history of synods commencing with the Council of Jerusalem, in the life of the Church. The Council of Trent prescribed annual synods and the 1917 Code of Canon Law legislated for bishops to hold one every ten years. More recently Vatican II desired, “that the venerable institution of synods and councils

4 ‘Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself. If we understand, as Saint John Chrysostom says, that “Church and Synod are synonymous”, (19) inasmuch as the Church is nothing other than the “journeying together” of God’s flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be “raised up” higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person “lower” himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.’ Francis, 2015

5 *ibid*

6 ‘A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing”. (12) It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he “says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7), Francis, 2015

7 Paparella, J., 2021

flourish with fresh vigour.” (Christus Dominus, 36).⁸ It

- ‘sought more dialogic and participatory processes’;
- taught that the whole Church has been given the gift of divine revelation, as well as the gift to interpret it faithfully – all have a special gift derived from baptism, a sense for the faith (sensus fidei), all the church together has “the faithful’s sense of the faith” (sensus fidelium);
- affirmed that bishops have a ministry of teaching that involves listening to the voices of the faithful before they speak.⁹

In 1965 Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops in keeping with the call of Vatican II to maintain the collegial spirit fostered by the Council. They are now held every two to three years on various matters of importance, bringing together bishops, experts and delegates.

A Plenary Council is also a gathering, traditionally of the bishops of a particular territory, along with a number of priests and others, to consider matters of importance for the Church in that territory and to pass legislation that requires the approval of the Holy See (cf. Can. 446).¹⁰

Both synods and plenary councils can be influential but there is a distinction. The decisions that are made at a Plenary Council become binding for a particular territory, in our case the Catholic Church in Australia. A Synod does not have this legislative and governance authority, but it can provide direction.¹¹

Plenary Council – the Journey

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia spanned several years involving three stages and various phases:

I Preparation

- Phase I: Listening and dialogue
- Phase II: Listening and Discernment

II. Celebration

- First Assembly
- Second Assembly

III. Implementation – promulgation of the decrees¹²

8 Theology – Plenary Council <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/theology/>

9 *op.cit*

10 Frequently Asked Questions – Plenary Council <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/frequently-asked-questions/>

11 *op.cit*

12 Dantis, T. et.al, 2019, pp. 2–3

Its work was guided by the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council led first by Archbishop Mark Coleridge and then Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, supported by the Executive Committee, and the Facilitation Team which managed the process.

Preparation

The purpose of the preparation process was to listen, dialogue and discern the agenda¹³ by hearing the voice of each other and the Holy Spirit. Discernment was key.

How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment.¹⁴

Discernment It was facilitated by formation in spiritual conversations leading up to the assemblies and during the assemblies. The People of God in Australia were encouraged to gather in small groups, pray, suspend their own judgement, share stories, actively listen to the voices of those around them, and to the voice of the Holy Spirit so that they might reach a response. Participation acknowledged ‘that the Spirit of God is at work in the world, in the Church, in our mission and in every person.’¹⁵

The Preparation stage involved two phases.

1. Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

Groups and individuals had the opportunity to reflect on two questions and respond to an invitation. They were encouraged to reflect upon

1. what they thought God was asking of us in Australia at this time, and
2. raise any questions they might have about the future of the Church in Australia that they would like the Plenary Council to consider.

They were also invited to

3. share a story about their experience of faith or an experience of the Church in Australia that had shaped them.

Through the use of spiritual conversations supported by resources developed by the

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Francis, 2018, 166

¹⁵ Cribb, I., 2021

Facilitation Team people had an opportunity ‘to listen to the voice of God speaking through the voices of the people in order to gain a “sense of the faith” (sensus fidei, EG119).¹⁶

More than 222,000 people responded, resulting in 17,457 submissions from across Australia. The submissions were wide ranging and revealed the lived and historical experience of the Australian Catholic Church. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the submissions by the National Centre for Pastoral Research resulted in the publication of *Listen to What the Spirit is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue*.¹⁷

Phase II: Listening and Discernment

The final report of Phase I identified emerging themes. Following further prayer and reflection by those charged with oversight of the process six national themes were identified

- Missionary and evangelising
- Inclusive, participatory and synodal
- Prayerful and Eucharistic
- Humble, healing, and merciful
- A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- Open to conversion, renewal, and reform.¹⁸

*Snapshot reports*¹⁹ supported by a discernment guide, and spiritual resources were distributed to the People of God for further discernment on ‘How is God calling us to be a Christ-centred Church in Australia?’ Again spiritual conversations were adopted as the preferred method but they were communal not individual conversations.

Discerned responses were submitted to six Discernment and Writing Groups. In addition to the submissions the groups reflected on Scripture, Church teaching and tradition, Canon Law and other relevant advice to produce thematic discernment papers²⁰ and working proposals for the Plenary Council.

16 Dantis, T. et.al, 2019, p.xiii

17 FINAL-BOOK-v7-online-version-LISTEN-TO-WHAT-THE-SPIRIT-IS-SAYING.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FINAL-BOOK-v7-online-version-LISTEN-TO-WHAT-THE-SPIRIT-IS-SAYING.pdf>

18 Reports – Plenary Council <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/resources/reports/#snapshotreports>

19 About the National Themes for Discernment – Plenary Council <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/themes/about-the-themes/>

20 PC2020-thematic-papers-1.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-1.pdf>, PC2020-thematic-papers-2.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-2.pdf>, PC2020-thematic-papers-3.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-3.pdf>

Ultimately the process produced

- *Continuing the Journey: Working Document (Instrumentum Laboris)*²¹ released February 2021, and
- *the Agenda for the First Assembly*²² comprised of 16 questions under 6 themes
- Conversion
- Prayer
- Formation
- Structures
- Governance
- Institutions

Celebration

1. First General Assembly

The First Assembly was held between the 3rd and 10th October 2021. COVID-19 had already delayed the start and its impact dictated that the format would be “multi-modal” combining in-person and online engagement. Coffee conversations were scheduled to familiarise members with the Statutes and Norms,²³ spiritual conversations, and the logistics on how the Assembly would proceed. They also enabled members to familiarise themselves with each other.

284 members – bishops, clergy, religious and laity – gathered each day in prayer. Through spiritual conversations they discerned responses to 14 agenda questions that were divided between ten virtual groups of approximately 30 people. All groups reflected on one question but some groups had two questions. The groups assigned two questions expressed difficulty doing justice to each question because of time constraints, and indeed this was my experience.

[content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-3.pdf](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-3.pdf), PC2020-thematic- papers-4. pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-4.pdf>, PC2020-thematic-papers-5.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/PC2020-thematic-papers-5.pdf>, PC2020-thematic-papers-6.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PC2020-thematic-papers-6.pdf>

21 PC-IL-210902-online.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/PC-IL-210902-online.pdf>

22 Plenary-Council-Agenda.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Plenary-Council-Agenda.pdf>

23 STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf>

The Assembly as a whole reflected upon the two questions²⁴ that dealt with the wounds of abuse and the needs of the most vulnerable. This day was powerful, emotional and challenging.

Individual members were also able to provide written submissions, known as Interventions, on a topic of their choosing throughout the Assembly. Greater clarity around their purpose would have been useful.

The fruits of all this discernment were collated into *First Assembly Proposals from Small Groups and Individuals*.²⁵

Between the Assemblies

Between the First Assembly and the Second Assembly Towards the Second Assembly: Working Document for Members based on the fruits of all that had gone before was written. It was released on the 28 February 2022 and identified four thematic foci:-

A. Deeper Communion Enriched by Diversity (Participation)

B. Ecclesial Leadership and Governance Growing as Disciples and Servants of the Gospel

C. To Witness to Faith, Hope and Love as Missionary Disciples in the World

D. To Proclaim God's new creation as people of prayer, healing and hope (Reconciliation, compassion for the wounded, care for our common home).

Its distribution was restricted to Members only. They were invited to submit a response to the

Drafting Committee by 4 April 2022, a tight turn around.

The feedback of members combined with the feedback of committees and advisers to the Plenary Council resulted in the Framework for Motions,²⁶ which was released in late May. Members were again

invited to provide feedback. This was again considered by the Drafting Committee and distilled into the *Final Motions and Amendment*^{27,27} document, which was released in late June. It formed the agenda for the

24 How might we heal the wounds of abuse, coming to see through the eyes of those who have been abused? How might the Church in Australia meet the needs of the most vulnerable, go to the peripheries, be missionary in places that may be overlooked or left behind in contemporary Australia? How might we partner with others (Christians, people of other faiths, neighbourhood community groups, government) to do this?

25 First Assembly Proposals with Appendix.pdf – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wi8RrPZPBKSHX-b6jjY3gvMdQQ26tcse/view>

26 Framework for Motions, 2022, FINAL Framework for Motions.pdf – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EiQBQV8U8-T5DemhN1TY-WSIT4uSzy-v/view>

27 FINAL Motions and Amendments 29 June 2022.pdf – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GxQw1b3kNjgKPttwQlufi672hBpBKHCh/view>

Second Assembly.

Coffee conversations held throughout June supported members in their understanding of the document and the process to be followed during the Second Assembly.

2. Second General Assembly

277 Members gathered in a very wintery and COVID affected Sydney between July 3–9, 2022. The week was marked by Acknowledgements of Country, daily liturgy, and discernment based on spiritual conversations.

Thirty groups of approximately 8 people representative of the diverse Plenary Council membership gathered to undertake the work of the session.

The agenda comprised eleven parts – eight parts addressed the themes identified by previous discernment and three parts addressed operational matters related to the Plenary Council. They were:

Part 1: Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts

Part 2: Choosing Repentance – Seeking Healing

Part 3: Called by Christ – Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples

- Part 4: Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men
- Part 5: Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World
- Part 6: Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry
- Part 7: At the Service of Communion, Participation, and Mission: Governance
- Part 8: Integral Ecology and Conversion for the Sake of our Common Home
- Part 9: The Implementation Phase Fifth Plenary Council
- Part 10: Decrees Fifth Plenary Council of Australia
- Part 11: Closing the Plenary Council

Motions, Amendments and Voting

More than thirty-five motions preceded by spiritual conversations and interventions were put to a consultative²⁸ and/or deliberative²⁹ vote. Motions that received a qualified majority, namely two-thirds of deliberative voters eligible and present, were passed by the Plenary Council and confirmed as the decrees of the Plenary

28 All members called to the Plenary Council who are not bishops, or and are not those mentioned in Article 4, have the right of a consultative vote (Can. 443 §3, 1°– 4°), [STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf) <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf>, p.16

29 Bishops called to the Plenary Council and those mentioned in Article 4, have the right of a deliberative vote (Can. 443 §1, 1°– 3°; §2, Can. 450, 1°). [STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf) <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/STATUTES-AND-REGULATORY-NORMS-16-July-2021.pdf> p.17

Council.

Three motions failed

- Motion 4.5 which comprised several parts including representation of women in decision making, appropriate remuneration, re-examination of the recommendations contained in *Woman and Man: The Bishops Respond* (2000) and consideration of women for ministry as deacon should this be recognised by Rome;³⁰
- Motion 4.6, which called for new opportunities for the participation of women in ministries and roles that were stable, recognised, resourced and engaged with the most important aspects of diocesan and parish life;³¹ and
- Motion 5.4 which requested an amendment to canon 767 to permit lay people entrusted with the formal ministry of preaching in the Latin Church to preach in the Eucharistic assembly.³²

Motions 4.5 and 4.6 were redrafted following the protest on the floor of the Assembly described below. This resulted in the formulation of several motions that honoured the spirit of the failed motions, the preceding discernment and the voices of Assembly members. In the redrafted format the motions achieved the required two-thirds majority.³³

Implementation

The closure of the Plenary Council on July 10 marked the introduction of the third stage of the journey, that of implementation. At its November 2022 meeting the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) formally approved the acts and decrees of the Plenary Council and authorised their submission to the Apostolic See for its approval.³⁴

The Bishops Conference also approved the terms of reference³⁵ for the review

30 FINAL Voting Outcomes for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – July 6 2022.pdf - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tGlic2_-4rwVcFaSWnB9c1UiMvOq7wDS/view, pp. 4–5

31 FINAL Voting Outcomes for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – July 6 2022.pdf - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tGlic2_-4rwVcFaSWnB9c1UiMvOq7wDS/view p. 6

32 FINAL Voting Outcomes for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – July 8 2022.pdf - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11CQ3UPmYhykjrKLU34gInogJo6w5JXg1/view> p.7

33 FINAL Voting Outcomes for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – July 8 2022.pdf - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11CQ3UPmYhykjrKLU34gInogJo6w5JXg1/view> pp. 1–4

34 In accordance with canon 446 the decrees cannot be promulgated until they are reviewed by Rome. Once approved they will be promulgated in the *Australasian Catholic Record* and on the ACBC website.

35 Terms-of-Reference-Implementation-Plan.pdf <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Terms-of-Reference-Implementation-Plan.pdf>

of the implementation of the Plenary Council. Oversight and coordination for each decree was entrusted to at least one of the Bishops Conference Commissions. Each Commission is required to provide reports to the May 2023 plenary meeting of the Bishops Conference, followed by a review in 2025, and the submission of a final review report to be published in 2027.

Reflections

As the Plenary Council journey occurred over several years and covered several stages it seems reasonable to share my reflections under broadly the same headings used above.

Preparation – Listening and Dialogue and Listening and Discernment

This stage was a mammoth and unique undertaking, an amazingly rich experience, and the first real exposure of ordinary Australian Catholics to spiritual conversations.

Submissions were wide ranging and revealed not entirely unexpected diverse and conflicting views. In no particular order concerns were raised about

- spiritual and faith formation, especially in a secularising world
- our sacramental life
- marriage, parenting and families
- the roles of laity, women, young people
- the mission to people who were divorced and/or remarried, LGBTIQ+
- people, and people on the periphery
- social justice in general
- the need for inclusive language
- the viability of parishes and some regional dioceses
- engagement with the clergy and the impact of clericalism
- lay governance
- concerns for the environment, and
- the impact of COVID.

The consultation also revealed

- ongoing trauma and pain flowing from the abuse scandal, loss of trust and need for healing
- the cultural diversity of the Australian Church
- depth of people's commitment to the Church, and
- acknowledgement of the good works being done.

First Assembly

Members were challenged by the multi-modal format but rose to the occasion to reveal the fruit of their discernment. Key reflections on the First Assembly to my mind reinforced and developed the concerns expressed during the Preparation

stage. For the sake of simplicity, I have grouped my reflections under the following headings:

- **General**

- There was
 - a genuine concern for the Church and recognition of her diverse nature
 - commitment to listening and hearing - respectful conversations
 - the voice of strong and passionate young women
 - engagement of the clergy
 - recognition
 - of the need to unlearn, to learn and relearn the wisdom of God at the heart of our tradition, not to limit God but for the purpose of growth,³⁶
 - of the need to be a self-critical Church,³⁷
 - that ‘the Holy Spirit is life, movement, colour, radiance and
 - restorative stillness in the din’³⁸
- There was also recognition of
 - the need to learn from First Nations Peoples,
 - the need to address abuse not only sexual but also violence wherever it occurs, and
 - the need for ecological conversion

Importantly, the above was not restricted to recognition but included calls for action, transparency and accountability, evidence of which can be found in First Assembly Proposals from Small Groups and Individuals.³⁹

- **Process**

- Agenda questions appeared unfocussed but ultimately there was wide-ranging discussion – most if not all issues raised in submissions⁴⁰ were heard to some degree.
- Spiritual conversations proved to be a productive way to listen and hear – they were crucial to the navigation through diverse opinions.
- The day of lamentation was confronting and powerful – it called us to account and to repentance.

36 Lennan, R. 2021

37 *ibid*

38 Johnson, E. in Lennan, R.. 2021; Lennan, R. 2022

39 First Assembly Proposals with Appendix.pdf <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wi8RrPZPBKSHX-b6jjY3gvMdQQ26tcse/view>

40 Catholics for Renewal, 2022, Table 20

- It was exhausting, but exhilarating and left me appreciative of the work done in the lead up to
- the Assembly.
- **Some improvements**
 - There was a need for a better balance between small group and individual proposals/interventions. Their status was problematic with some members actively engaged whilst others felt they did not have an opportunity to provide their input.
 - At times, the Assembly would have benefited from clearer direction, perhaps this was the result of the multi-modal format.
 - There was some confusion about the process, which resulted in some members feeling they did not have sufficient time to develop the proposals being tabled by their nominated group.
 - The virtual process did work but we lost the incidental meetings, the opportunities to explore ideas and develop relationships.
 - The use of titles under names was a bit off putting, but manageable.

Between Assemblies

The time between the assemblies provided an opportunity for further reflection and the chance to provide feedback on

- proposed themes to emerge from the Preparation stage and the First Assembly,
- amendments on the initial framework document, and
- the final document.

This was assisted by the coffee conversations, which were of real value, but unfortunately the shortness of time was an impediment. There was limited or no ability to discuss documents with a wider audience.

Second Assembly

The Second Assembly was emotionally charged, not helped by COVID and the weather. There were many positives and I refer to these below, but what stands out for me is the initial failure of Part 4:

Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men. This has been widely acclaimed as the turning point of deliberations and is acknowledged as such in the Plenary Council concluding statement.

At a pivotal juncture in the assembly, some of these differences helped move the Council from having a process to being-in process; from

following an agenda to following the Holy Spirit into the unknown. Not only did this moment overturn the timetable and the order of proceedings; it also meant that we had to address strongly-felt emotions. The days that followed established new patterns of listening and dialogue, which are nascent but real.⁴¹

The protest was spontaneous and powerful and ultimately changed the dynamics of the Council. It seems wise to first make a comment about the role of the bishops. They have come under attack for the failure but to my mind there were also problems with the consultative vote. Yes Motion 4.5 which comprised several parts including representation of women in decision making, and consideration of women for ministry as deacon achieved a two-thirds but not overwhelming majority in the consultative vote, but Motion 4.6 which called for new opportunities for the participation of women in ministries and roles did not achieve a qualified majority.⁴² This failure I believe can be partly explained by polarisation around the female diaconate, which interestingly was part of Motion 4.5 and not 4.6. Regardless, the consultative votes and the associated discussion could have been construed as lack of consensus. Whilst this cannot be the final explanation (as each bishop possesses agency) they may have pointed to how each might vote.

The failure of Part 4 resulted in a spontaneous protest by women, and some men, bishops and clergy. After morning tea women invited women and men to stand in silence at the back of the room and not take their seats by way of protest. To their credit the Steering Committee pivoted in response. Instead of ploughing on the assembly was halted in order to explore a way forward, a way that ultimately had profound consequences for the Assembly. As Bishop Long noted

Providentially, the reading for that day was part of the Pentecost story. It read ‘and suddenly from heaven, there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting’. We did not expect a kind of ‘violent wind’ that disrupted, changed the group dynamic and led to a moment of profound revelation.⁴³

Interestingly the Assembly hall had been hit with violent wind at the start of the day, a sign perhaps to what was to come.

41 Concluding Statement – Second General Assembly.pdf – <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jieDZjTrfF2EuHTuM4a6lrEQdbV3j5RT/view>, p.1

42 FINAL Voting Outcomes for the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia – July 6.pdf – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tGlic2_-4rwVcFaSWnB9c1UiMvOq7wDS/view

43 Long Van Nguyen, V. 2022, ‘Reflection on the Final Assembly of the Plenary Council’ in *Champagnat* Vol 24, No 2 pp.5–6

The disruption was timely as signs of disagreement, or lines in the sand, had become evident. Polarisation shaped to some extent the interventions and proposed amendments related to LGBTIQA+ issues but most notably Part 4 with the focus on female ordination to the diaconate.

The stopping of the agenda to deal with the palpable hurt and frustration was in my mind Spirit inspired as the session could have descended into chaos. Instead we addressed the problem together through open and respectful conversations. The Holy Spirit disrupted and guided – it was a graced moment which provided an opportunity to hear people's views both at table and in the assembly proper for the remainder of the day.

The Assembly endorsed the redrafting of Part 4 and established a drafting team to redraft the paper. The team addressed the concerns heard in the sessions following the protest, pros and cons, but also honoured the voices heard during the Preparation stage. Whilst milder than the original Part 4 the redrafted paper was a better paper. Now instead of two motions there were five, all of which achieved an overwhelmingly qualified majority in the consultative and deliberative votes.

In addition to the redrafted paper the disruption led to an improved process and a change of tone and atmosphere. Spiritual conversations were reworked to allow people time to directly address the Assembly from the floor, identify gaps and suggest amendments. Members addressed the issues directly and owned their views on the floor.

From time to time straw polls determined support for possible amendments before they were incorporated into the draft motions. Not only did this remove the obfuscation but it streamlined the process.

In relation to tone and atmosphere – there was a notable change, indeed even lightness in proceedings following the protest and its management. It seemed that members were more open, but importantly more willing to engage with those who were not of the same opinion.

All of this influenced the deliberations and ultimately the Plenary Council outcomes.

Was the Plenary Council a success?

The answer depends on how you define success. A plenary council is about legislation and shared practices across a territory. Few of the decrees are legislative in nature, rather they provide opportunities so it can be argued that the success of the

Plenary Council was limited.⁴⁴ As a synod, however, it did work because it started with listening, dialogue and discernment, identified key themes, and we gathered together to address these issues and suggest ways forward – it gave direction.

On the plus side,

- members and non-members – gathered across Australia to respectfully discern what God was asking of the Church in Australia today;
- members went on a journey open to the Holy Spirit, and under that guidance they listened, discussed and discerned in a positive way;⁴⁵
- women and men, young and old, laity and clergy, Eastern and Western lungs of the Church, Indigenous brothers and sisters, people from multicultural Australia – all gathered together to discern what God was asking, and
- for me engagement with people in my own diocese, but also across Australia was truly memorable and appreciated.

Consequently there was

- an apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; acceptance of NATSICC recommendations to the Plenary Council; and endorsement of the Uluru Statement from the Heart (Decree 1).
- an apology to the victims of sexual abuse, their families and communities; a new name for ‘Safeguarding Sunday’ and a call for the development of appropriate rituals and resources for the day (Decree 2).
- openness to diverse voices and greater inclusion; and solidarity with all who have been hurt and marginalised by the Church including refugees, divorced and remarried people, and LGBTIQA+ people (Decree 3).
- a commitment to support the participation of women in the most important aspects of diocesan and parish life; an examination of how best to implement female diaconate should there be a change in universal law; and a call to overcome the assumptions, culture, practices and language that result in inequality (Decree 4).
- a commitment to the importance of liturgical worship and the role of the family and parishes in faith formation; endorsement of a review of the guidelines for lay people to participate in preaching; and calls for the institution of a program of catechesis to promote understanding of Sacrament of Penance, the wider use of the Third Rite of Reconciliation and a new translation of the Roman missal (Decree 5).
- commitment to the development of a culture of life-long faith formation; support for ministry and leadership; commitments to the development of ecumenical relationships, national Formation for Leadership strategies that address synodal practice, and a national framework for formation in Catholic Social Teaching (Decree 6).
- affirmation of the need for synodal reform, establishment of pastoral councils and finance committees, institution of a study of the implementation of

⁴⁴ For a fuller response see Doogue, G. 2022

⁴⁵ Concluding Statement – Second General Assembly.pdf - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jjeDZjTrfF2EuHTuM4a6lrEQdbV3j5RT/view>

the recommendations from *The Light from the Southern Cross* and the establishment of a national Synodal Roundtable (Decree 7).

- a commitment that every diocese, parish and agency would develop or participate in *Laudato' si'* action plans by 2030 (Decree 8).

The Plenary Council was also positive because for the first time laity and particularly women joined bishops, clergy and religious to discuss the future of the Church together. This was greatly assisted by the process – listening, dialogue and discernment, and the spiritual conversations – which formed members and those who engaged with the process. It was facilitated by the planning, organisation and delivery undertaken by the Steering, Facilitation and Coordinating Committees, an amazing and generous contribution.

Challenges however remain, not the least being

- how will issues including the place of women in the Church and society; the place of LGBTQI+ people and their concerns;⁴⁶ issues related to family and parenting, and the ongoing matter of engaging youth be managed?
- how do we respectfully address different opinions, achieve unity in diversity, embrace change?
- how will we address evangelisation in the light of the rise in the numbers of Australians who do not believe in God?⁴⁷
- how are we going to address the formation of priests, celibacy and married priests?
- will we achieve consistency of practice across the nation?
- how will we support dioceses and parishes who are not well resourced?
- how will we embed spiritual conversations as customary practice?

Final words

The Plenary Council did not fully address all the issues raised in the Listening and Dialogue phase, but it was a real step on the pilgrim path towards a resurrected Church within a tight time framework. The journey and the process set a good example for how the people of God can with the help of the Holy Spirit engage with everyone together and move forward. It embraced the call to walk a synodal path and as such it was a pivotal moment in the life of the Church in Australia, a journey that must continue. It was also a journey for which I am grateful, one that has delivered many blessings for me.

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⁴⁷ Archbishop Fisher in Lamb, C., 2022, p.8



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BOOK REVIEW

Biographical Dictionary of Australian Catholic Educators

Website, launched 2022:

<https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/faculties-directorates-and-staff/faculty-of-theology-and-philosophy/biographical-dictionary-of-australian-catholic-educators>

Reviewed by Edmund Campion*

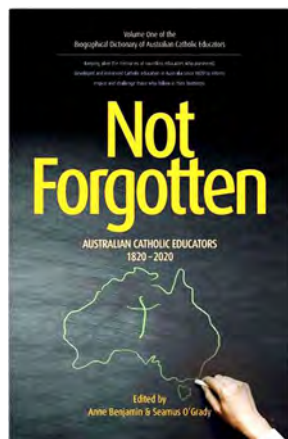
Fellow students of history,

I am honoured to speak here at the launch of the website for the *Biographical Dictionary of Australian Catholic Educators* – BDACE for short.

I once wrote that nuns in their schools were the makers of the Catholic Church in Australia. This is still true ... only, now the nuns have been replaced by lay teachers, who have taken on the responsibility, the vocation, the ministry of handing on Catholic culture and the Catholic way of life to successive generations. This BDACE is for them, so that they will know what came before them.

Two years ago, Coventry Press published *Not Forgotten*, edited by Anne Benjamin and Seamus O'Grady. It carried 30 select biographies of educators with surrounding essays giving context and reflection. *Not Forgotten* was a sampler book of what might await us on this website, a taste of what was to come.

One of its outstanding essays was by Graham English, who had spent 46 years in Catholic education, starting as a Christian Brother and ending as a lecturer here at ACU. His essay is a masterly survey of the period from 1880 to 1960, the high point of nun-power in the parish schools and of the Brothers for boys in secondary schools. Graham was an archivist of his own experience – if there is a better essay on Catholic schools from 1880 to 1960, I don't know it.



* Historian Edmund Campion delivered this talk at the launch of BDACE at ACU North Sydney on 20 July 2022.

He died in June last year, leaving behind two fascinating, as yet unpublished, autobiographical memoirs. I expect his entry will soon appear on the BDACE website, if it's not already there.

When Graham English was in his early twenties, Patrick O'Farrell wrote, in 1968, *The Catholic Church in Australia: A Short History, 1788–1967*. Patrick had come from New Zealand to the ANU for his PhD on the New Zealand labour movement. This done, he looked for a history of Catholicism in Australia...and found there wasn't one. So he wrote one himself, in six months, largely from the Sydney church archives. It was a bestseller, passed around, read and discussed in teachers colleges, parish discussion groups and convents. Critics of the Short History said it was a "bishops' book" – all about bishops and parish priests, with not much about Catholic laypeople. The author argued back at them that as an historian he had found Australian Catholicism to be, he wrote "a hierarchical and clerically-controlled church".

Patrick tried to fill the gaps in his Short History by an expanded version in 1977, called *The Catholic Church and Community: A History ...* expanded from 278 pages in 1968 to 429 pages in 1977 (151 pages more). I'm not going to discuss the differences in those two versions of our history; I've done this elsewhere. (There would be two other versions of the same book, which don't concern us here. The four versions are the same book with different titles.)

Allow me to say, however, that there is a revealing facet in the first two books, namely their bibliographies. The bibliography of the first book, the 1968 Short History, lists 95 items plus nine unpublished theses and research papers; whereas the second book, published in 1977, contains 216 items plus 54 theses and research papers. From 95-and-9 to 216-and-54 in 9 years – a remarkable expansion of territory. It shows what was going on in church history.

People who were Catholic found their identity in their history, which they saw as salvation history, linking them to Christ. In those turbulent years after Vatican II and *Humanae Vitae*, they turned to their history to make sense of what they were experiencing. Thus Patrick O'Farrell as teacher, supervisor, examiner, editor and writer, became the dean of Catholic historians. "To him more than to any other individual," said the American Catholic Historical Review in 1990, "is owed the fact that Catholic intellectual life in Australia is noticeably historical, rather than theological, philosophical or biblical."

A thing that's worth noticing about the new Catholic historians, after O'Farrell, is how many of them were interested in the view from the pews – people's history,

popular history, rather than head office history. Lives of bishops were still being written and parish histories about the parish priest's building programmes. As well as these, however, readers wanted to explore how it felt to be a Catholic, they wanted to hear the individual voices of individual Catholics, the voices of lay men and women. They wanted church historians to find a place for them in the history books.

Now I want to introduce you to three historians who met this need and so filled in the background for anyone writing entries for BDACE.

The first is Katharine Massam and her book is called *Sacred Threads*, subtitled *Catholic Spirituality in Australia 1922–1962*. Katharine Massam takes you inside the world of the people in the pews: the sights and sounds and smells and taste and feel of popular religion. Her Australian Catholicism was no corner store with a few items on its shelves, it was a vast emporium of spiritualities where you could choose what you wanted. She has done the work for anyone wanting to write about the spiritual lives of teachers of that period before the second Vatican Council.

Now, of course, in that pre-Vatican II period, most of our schools were staffed by religious sisters, nuns. Anne O'Brien's *God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia* was published in 2005. She tells us that sisters' congregations had already got their members writing autobiographies for the archives. I expect anyone writing about religious sisters who once taught in our schools will mine those archives, to catch those individual voices.

The third author I want to salute today is Adriano Pittarello, a Scalabrinian priest. The Scalabrinians came here after World War II, to care for Italian migrants. Going around his people, Pittarello came across many puzzles about the Catholicism they found here. Oh, they were Catholics themselves, no doubt about it; but church practices here seemed to them very strange. Where were the feastday celebrations



MacKillop Statue Adelaide, from the website of the Biographical Dictionary of Australian Catholic Educators (BDACE)

they knew at home? (One of them told him, “The Queen’s Birthday is not the same thing.”) Why were abstinence from alcohol pledges enforced at Confirmation ceremonies? Why were our ceremonies so unvisited, once the funeral was done? Not so at home, they said. At home, dancing in Lent was a serious sin. Not here ... some parishes held balls in Lent.

Serious academics had concluded that such questions meant that new arrivals had a different religion from the one they found here among Irish-Australians. Different religions? No, they were the same religion, only their religious cultures were different, as Pittarello argued in *Soup Without Salt: the Australian Catholic Church and the Italian Migrant*. The Irish-Australians were once our first ethnics, forerunners of a future multicultural Australia. Now the new arrivals, their religious cultures different from the one they found here, seemed to suggest a future multicultural church ... A multicultural church which impacted on our schools and, I would hope, on those writing about our teachers.

So I salute the new BDACE website because it will tell the stories of the makers and the continuators of Australian Catholicism – our educators.

Now they will not be forgotten.

BOOK REVIEW

Sub Tuum Praesidium: Marist Brothers in Australia 1872–2022

Authors: Julian Casey, John Luttrell, Peter Rodney and Neville Solomon

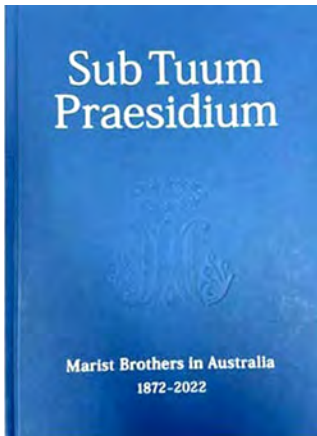
Publisher: Marist Brothers Australia

ISBN: 9780646853253

Hardcover, xiii + 562 pages

Price: \$45.00 + postage

Reviewed by Edmund Campion*



If there were an award for Best Church History Book of the year, *Sub Tuum Praesidium: Marist Brothers in Australia 1872–2022* would surely be a contender. Written by four Marist leaders, its title comes from the most ancient Marian prayer, a Marist schools' specialty as a hymn.

Numbers define this history. They started as a small community teaching in The Rocks (Sydney) in 1872, grew to more than 600 in 1970 and diminished to 173 in 2021. They spread across Australia and went overseas to countries such as PNG, Cambodia, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. As their manpower fell, they reached out to people, especially youths, who were attracted to the Marist ethos. As well, there were the schools, where lay teachers, women and men began to replace Brothers, to become in time school principals. Some readers may regret that the book does not tell more about the formation of these 'lay Marists' for they are seeds of a future harvest, perhaps.

A feature of this history is that no story is too shaming to tell. The first of these comes from the last year of old Cardinal Moran's life. He wanted to replace Marist Brothers with Christian Brothers at the Cathedral school and used a threat

* Edmund Campion is a Sydney priest.

of interdicts (denial of Mass and sacraments) to get his way with both brotherhoods. He maligned one Marist by calling him a ‘modernist’, a current heresy, because of his opposition to ecclesiastical power.

Another difficult story, told well, comes from the present century, the sex abuse crisis. It is honest history, twenty pages written largely from the Royal Commission. The leadership did not immediately get rid of villainous Brothers, arguing that a family does not expel members who have done wrong – ‘it is contrary to the Gospel and to Marist family spirit’. Yet they found that few criminals wanted to continue as Brothers and under advice determined on dismissal.

This is an administrative history, not an anthology of personal stories. Readers from outside the Marist tradition should not be put off by the book’s blizzard of acronyms – MYM, MAPS, MSO, AMS, etc. Towards the back there is a short chapter telling how Marist Brothers have changed in recent years. It begins with a page of chilling prescriptions from the old Rule and progresses to a 2018 survey where 20 enduring Brothers say how they have developed their vocations, especially their prayer lives. If you read nothing else, read these pages.

BOOK REVIEW

Autobiography of Dr Sr Mary Glowrey "God's Good for Nothing"

Author: Mary Glowrey MJM, completed by Sr Peter Julian (Margaret) Barrett
MJM

Publisher: Mary Glowrey Heritage Limited

ISBN 9780645202304

Paperback: 200 pages

Price: \$49.95 + postage and handling \$10 (Currently, Australia only).

Inquiries: info@maryglowreymuseum.info

Reviewed by Irene Franklin*

This is a riveting read that made me doubt if such a story will ever be possible in the future because our society has changed so much. It really made me reflect deeply on what are the important fundamentals that guide me and make me who I am. Mary's fundamentals were her family, her faith and her community; later, also, her vocation to save souls and relieve suffering.

Mary Glowrey was born in country Victoria on 23 June 1887 and died in Bangalore, India on 5 May 1957. Her missionary career spanned thirty six years. She gained her medical degree in 1910 from the University of Melbourne. She worked for a number of years in both public and private practice. In 1919 she was awarded the higher degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Melbourne in Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Ophthalmology. The 29 November 1924 was the day of her Solemn Profession as a Religious Sister in the Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. She truly had become a unique creation of the Almighty, a Doctor Sister.

The book is essentially in two parts. Part 1 has twelve chapters written by Mary in response to the suggestion by her Superior. It contains the stories that mattered to Mary from her earliest days. The last few chapters are rather a truncated tale of her work. She was already very seriously ill when she started and was unable to finish. Each chapter is followed by a Commentary written by someone who was able to expand on what Mary had written.

* Irene Franklin is a retired doctor and an ACHS member.

Part 2 is written by someone who was in the same order and had worked with her for a number of years. This contains chapters thirteen to twenty two and tells of the successes and failures in the mammoth task of striving to bring as best a standard of health care as possible to marginalised women and children. Each chapter also has a Commentary.

The ruling passion that Mary had was to do God's will. Her whole approach to life was deeply prayerful and her focus was on the good she could do for the other. She forgot about herself and her own needs.

Mary arrived in India in 1920, choosing to go to work in Guntur where the people were, for the most part, very poor, poorly educated with all the usual consequences of this. Women wouldn't go to a male doctor so half the population couldn't avail themselves of Western style treatment even if they could have accessed it. Another problem was the huge number of patients in contrast to the small number of trained staff.

When she first saw her Dispensary it contained sodium bicarbonate, potassium citrate and Epsom salts, magnesium sulphate. There was a tiny cupboard made of boxes that contained a few instruments. The building was small and basic. When she started she realised that the people couldn't afford modern pharmaceuticals nor were they physically accessible so she modified traditional medicines that she felt were effective. This primitive place became essentially an emergency treatment centre.

In 1925 the foundation stone was laid for St Joseph's hospital which opened with only one bed. The number of beds increased rapidly over time.

By 1949 St Joseph's hospital had become a large complex with everything we expect to find in a modern hospital so it became accredited to train nurses.

The legacy of the health care systems she initiated continues to care for millions of people today.

What an incredible woman. What a gigantic achievement.

To God be the glory.

Her cause for canonisation is before the Vatican at present.

BOOK REVIEW

A Badge of Honour: Life Stories

Author: Mick O'Brien

Publisher: Mick O'Brien, Essendon, Vic.

ISBN: Not applied for

Paperback, 425 pages

Price: \$30 if unposted + \$10 donation for victims of sexual abuse + \$10 if posted (= \$50 total if book is ordered with donation and mailing is requested: contact by email or phone: michaelob0702@gmail.com or mobile 0403 105 301

Reviewed by Michael Costigan*

His beloved late mother would not have approved, but the seventh born of her nine children, baptized Michael David O'Brien, insists that, as the author-publisher of this self-published book he be called Mick, his invariably preferred version of his Christian name. It is as Mick O'Brien that this popular ex-seminarian and now retired lawyer complied with the Father's Day wishes of his four children by gathering together written answers to questions they would put to him. He then published them as a book containing as well some of his other writings, with a few contributions from elsewhere.



While not strictly speaking an autobiography, *A Badge of Honour* tells much about Mick O'Brien's active and fascinating life. After school under the Christian Brothers he had spent six and a half years in two seminaries, Victoria's Corpus Christi College (CCC), Werribee and Glen Waverley from 1962 to 1966 and Rome's Propaganda Fide College from 1966 to 1968, without proceeding to priestly ordination. His was one of forty-two accounts of different men's seminary experiences published in *Byways* (Alella Books, 2018) and reviewed in the 2018 issue of this *Journal* (Volume 39, pages 215-218). That contribution is repeated

* Michael Costigan was Associate Editor of the Archdiocesan paper *The Advocate* (Melbourne, 1961–69)

in this book and expanded by references in a number of the essays. The writer has positive recollections of both colleges, where he believes he learned and went through much that would stand him in good stead in later life. As a proud CCC alumnus, he has been assisting the organisers of one celebration in 2023 marking the centenary of the opening of Archbishop Mannix's Werribee seminary in 1923.

Half way during his second year in Rome, which he had grown to love, Mick decided that the priesthood would not be his calling, but he was allowed to complete the year of study and training in Propaganda and its next door Urban University in the hope that it all might serve him well after departure. Seminary superiors in many places would not have been so accommodating.

Returning to Australia, O'Brien turned to Law for his future career, completing an Honours Law degree at Melbourne University. That career was, in his words, "predominantly in the area of criminal defence work within the Legal Aid Commission of Victoria, as its Director of the Criminal Law Division". In 1972 he became a foundation member of Fitzroy Legal Service, which set an example for similar bodies influenced by the protection of the accused by the Blackstone Principle, named after the English 19th Century jurist Lord William Blackstone: "It is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer." On behalf of the Young Christian Workers and the St Vincent de Paul Society from 1968 to 1974, Mick undertook regular prison visitation. He voluntarily did other extra-curricular work, including much for his old school, St Bernard's, Essendon.

This book depends on sometimes long answers to random and presumably unpredictable questions. This leads to the contents being ordered somewhat haphazardly, but treasures are not hard to find. There is much about his family, including the author's eight siblings, only one of them still living, and four children, born after his happy marriage to Margaret Coghlan. It is in answer to the question "What would you consider your motto?" that the reply came to O'Brien in consoling words offered to him after an employment setback had been linked with a generous act he took to reduce the charge against an accused person. He was told he should wear what occurred "like a badge of Honour". He had no hesitation about adopting "A Badge of Honour" as his motto and as the title of this readable and worthwhile volume, which is expected to be followed by a self-published sequel he has been preparing, concentrating on his legal career.

This reviewer hopes the next book will include coverage of Mick O'Brien's admirable stand, akin to Father Frank Brennan's and influenced by his own Criminal Law expertise, opposing the prospect, now removed thanks to the High Court, that Cardinal Pell would remain the victim of a grave miscarriage of justice.

BOOK REVIEW

Towards the End of My Days: Theological and spiritual reflections

Author: Geoffrey Robinson,

Published by: Garratt Publishing

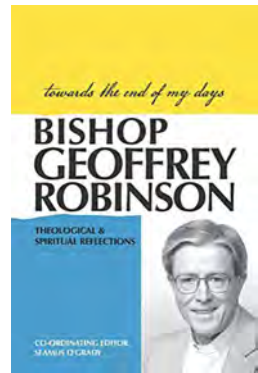
ISBN: 9781922484192

Paperback: 434 pages

\$34.95

Reviewed by Anne Power*

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson (1937-2020) was ordained priest in 1960 and subsequently was awarded advanced degrees in philosophy, theology and canon law, first in Australia and subsequently in Rome. For many years (1986–2004) Robinson served as the chairman of the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Board and the Australian Catholic Education Commission for New South Wales. Finally, he worked extensively in the areas of ecumenism and professional standards in ministry. He retired as Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney in 2004 because of ill health and eventually succumbed to cancer in 2020. He was a pastor who was sympathetic to those struggling with contemporary issues that challenge their faith. His 2007 book, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: reclaiming the spirit of Jesus* remains relevant and compelling today. Bishop Robinson was an outspoken voice for the victims of child sexual abuse within the Church and the need for just redress and effective child protection going forward.



The poetry with which these reflections open and which is sprinkled throughout the book makes the reader go back and re-listen to what is being said. Like all poetry, the focus is on the words chosen to express meaning. In the first poem,

* Anne Power is a music curriculum expert at Western Sydney University and ACHS Vice-President.

Robinson writes of the ‘explosion of God’s love...

Human beings slowly evolved
who could think and feel
and, at long, long last,
respond to God’s love.’

This book is a treasure into which the reader can dip at random or can read consecutively as it traces a historical approach to the way the Church may reflect on God:

We grow in moral and spiritual stature
When we constantly
Ask and live the question
“What is the most loving thing
I can do here and now?”

Robinson considers a range of issues from God, One and Three (through many images) to Structural Change in the Church, (through history) from The Divine in Human Hands (through a dispassionate gaze on material assets) to Relationship with the Religion of Islam (clearly explaining what is in the Qur’an and the various traditions that have interpreted it). The constant theme of these reflections is that the Church grows out of the story of people on a journey. The Bible readings that guide us are mixtures of pure divine wisdom and human ideas. Robinson can speak with scholarly ease of the literary forms in the Bible. With equal strength, he can speak of The Battle for the Imagination. This is a chapter I know I will return to many times. It looks without flinching at the scandals of child abuse, at the withdrawal of women from the Church and at the wealth of the Church. It also acknowledges the inspiring ceremonies that move hearts despite secular currents around in society.

Another favourite chapter is The Smell of the Sheep. This chapter looks at prayer and collaborative ministry, the art and science of leadership and the beautiful model of service that Jesus gave.

I warmly encourage reading this book, which is timely in its publication at a time of discussion of Church renewal.

BOOK REVIEW

My Accidental Career

Author: Brenda Niall

Publisher: Text Publishing, Melbourne

ISBN: 9781922458148 (paperback)

ISBN: 9781922459480 (ebook)

Price: \$35.00

Reviewed by Michael Costigan*

Launched early in 2022, this memoir by the writer justifiably labelled Australia's foremost biographer, has been hailed by reviewers as adding another to her list of outstanding literary achievements.

Written after Brenda Niall had turned 91, the book displays again the quality of her writing and other skills, well described in these terms by the Jesuit priest Andrew Hamilton: "It lies in the clarity of her thought, the exact choice of words, the alternation of anecdote and reflection and the self-effacement that creates a link between the reader and the work itself. Her writing has the rare gift of simplicity."

Commentators and the author herself have something to say about the use in the title, chosen as a respectful salute towards Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career*, of the adjective "accidental" and the noun "career". What emerges first is that neither the teaching nuns, Faithful Companions of Jesus, at her school, Genazzano Convent in Kew, nor some of her family and friends, nor (later) most of her working colleagues in an office where her abilities were never fully used or even known, would have foreseen her future cultural role and the course her life was to take. Secondly, many years were to pass before the very notion of a "career", above all and finally as the writer of award-winning biographies, was to apply to one who was able to look back ruefully on her "unambitious beginnings". She could also speak of the "low expectations" of her convent education and of the widely held idea that, for

* Michael Costigan was Associate Editor (as a priest) of *The Advocate* (Melbourne); founding Director of the Literature Board of the Australia Council; and first Executive Secretary of the Australian Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace. In 2005 he was appointed an Adjunct Professor of Australian Catholic University.

its products, it was right that marriage be seen as “what most young women wanted and expected”.

One person among those closest to her who might have had the clearest vision about what really lay ahead for Brenda was her dearly loved father, the eminent Catholic medical practitioner Dr Frank Niall, who told her that she could have a future as a writer. It seems he also instilled in her before his premature death at fifty-three in 1952 the importance of being a listener, an essential prerequisite for doctors when diagnosing but also for anyone else needing to learn about and better understand the lives of others.

In 1948, her final year at Genazzano, Brenda brought inadequately applauded glory to her school by, among other things, winning a resident scholarship in the Newman College entrance examinations, gaining first-class honours in most of her Matriculation subjects, sharing (with, incidentally, the contributor of this review – she and I are only seven weeks apart in age) an Exhibition in English Literature and becoming the only student in a Victorian Catholic girls college to win a General Exhibition, as one of the State’s thirty highest scoring Matriculant examinees. As such, she was to find herself alongside only four other females, while the award went to twenty-six male scholars, among whom four were from two Catholic schools, both run by the Jesuits – three winners from Xavier College Kew (James Gobbo, later a famous lawyer and Victoria’s Governor, and the future Jesuits Ian Howells and Gerald O’Collins) and one from the older (founded in 1854) St Patrick’s College East Melbourne (this reviewer). At the time, Brenda might not have paid too much attention to the glaring gender imbalance in the list of General Exhibitionists. It was the way things were. Decades later she could speak of her “late developing feminist awareness”.

The early pages of this memoir set the scene nostalgically in Kew, the in-parts affluent Melbourne suburb where Brenda grew up. The home where that mostly occurred, between the ages of five and twenty-one, was the fondly remembered “Merrion Place”, a “sunny” new house at 15 Studley Park Road created in consultation with an architect by her devoted and generous mother, using with imagination her design talent. Subsequent pages make frequent mentions of some of the celebrities (mostly male, again, although some had more or less well-known wives or daughters) who resided for different periods on or near the famous street to which the Nialls moved. They included Daniel Mannix, Robert Menzies, John Wren, Jack Galbally, Michael Chamberlin, Patrick Cody and Salvatore Parer.

Of abiding interest to the social and cultural historian is Brenda Niall’s story

about her first two years, 1949 and 1950, studying arts at Melbourne University and the positive influence of Literature or English lecturers and tutors like Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Ian Maxwell, Alec Hope, Bruce Mitchell, Leonie Gibson (later Leonie Kramer), Gaye Tennant, Vincent Buckley and Vera Jennings. As well there was for her the friendship or at least the influence of other students, among them Mary Johnson, Rosalind Bain, Enid Murphy, Colin Thornton-Smith, Desmond O'Grady and Philip Martin.

It all changed in 1951, as a consequence of the sudden terminal illness of Brenda's father, who died in the following March, days after a graduation ceremony which left her with diminished enthusiasm (it was in fact a brief "full stop") for involvement in the university world. Fortunately in the long run this did not evolve into a total departure from an area to which she was to make such a noteworthy lifetime contribution.

The changed situation in her life was to exist for the best part of the next decade, when sympathetic offers of employment opportunities as an office worker in the Catholic Church's National Secretariat of Catholic Action (ANSCA) were twice given to her by B.A. (Bob) Santamaria, who had taken over control there from the retired founding Director, Frank Maher, a friend with his wife of the Nialls. Bob Santamaria, who had "an ability to charm and motivate", might have thought that Brenda's gifts could be of service to his work, as it undoubtedly was while she was editing his Rural Movement's periodical *Rural Life* and writing book reviews for his organisation's *News Weekly* or monitoring mainstream media for articles he needed. He might also have been at first compassionately aware of her need for a low-key occupation while trying to cope with the first major period of grieving she had known. Brenda does not speculate on Bob's possible motivation. But accepting his invitations, the second of which was to be an early and temporary research helper for a life of Mannix he planned to write, was not exactly a spirit-lifting move as it turned out.

Niall's picture of the reality of office life, at first in downtown Melbourne and then in Gertrude Street, Fitzroy, is depressing to a degree, with the extreme gender separation practised and where the women on the staff acted as traybearers and washersup, refrained from ever discussing their work among themselves, spent their spare time knitting and were obliged to address the men, who excluded them from often clandestine meetings, as "Mr".

Under Santamaria's single-minded directing and influence, notably on Dr Mannix, the Catholic Action office had become the de facto semi-secret power base

for his anti-communist “Movement” and eventually, in the late 50s and beyond, for the entity succeeding it, the National Civic Council. While working without much enjoyment in the organisation’s headquarters and receiving negative impressions of many of its mainly male activists, Brenda Niall might not have had the chance or the wish to become familiar with all of their activities, aims, decisions and achievements – or to reach conclusions about the political significance they in truth turned out to have for Australian society and the Catholic Church.

In the greater part of this volume Dr Niall offers fascinating details and keen-eyed, sometimes witty judgements about people, places and events. In summary, it is an account of the steps taken from the time of her early taste of university life to the still so fruitful years following her retirement as a paid academic. She takes readers to Monash University where she was employed for most of that time, to other universities in Australia, above all Canberra’s Australian National University and its Humanities Research Centre, and to different places in the world visited by her, usually as a diligent researcher seeking information about or better understanding of the subjects whose lives she was depicting. In telling her life story, she made the good decision to use at intervals a series of long and very readable extracts from diaries she kept during travels to Ireland in 1958, the University of Michigan’s Ann Arbor campus in 1967/68 (on a Fulbright Award), Yale University in 1975, England’s Oxford and Cambridge in 1985 and England again in 1999 (to see houses associated with the late Martin Boyd). The author is at her best describing houses with significance deriving from their human associations. This applies as well to the Niall family home in Studley Park Road, to a wartime holiday home on farmland in Tallarook, north of Melbourne, and its successor, a house by the beach in Mornington.

Another praiseworthy characteristic of Brenda’s writing is the frank, honest and moving way in which she covers personal and family matters. Adopting the principle that a worthwhile biography must facilitate a true understanding of the subject, she records details of the two occasions in her life, some twenty years apart, when the possibility of her entering a marriage became an issue. The first, around 1956 and 1957, was with a former part-time classics tutor whom she calls G and who had accompanied her to the Newman College Ball in 1952. Meeting again by chance after four years when Brenda was working in Santamaria’s Gertrude Street office while G, qualified by then due to a reluctantly undertaken law degree, was with a city legal firm, they found that love blossomed and became engaged. The mysterious disappearance of G’s father and the opposition of his mother to the

union were two of several reasons causing Brenda in time to hesitate about the plan and in distress to call the engagement off in October 1957. (In the previous month, on a short break from my nine-year Roman studies, I had the first and briefest of introductions to her while calling on Bob Santamaria with Father Eric D'Arcy.) About terminating the engagement in a period of mental turmoil Brenda writes with typical candour and a touch of self-deprecation: "I didn't know who I was. I found it hard to defend a decision I scarcely understood. What did I want? Today I might say that I wanted an undivided heart from G but wasn't ready or able to give him my own."

By the mid-1970s, Brenda and her long-time friend and adviser, the well-known Canberra-based, New Zealand-born academic, writer and editor Grahame Johnston, who had "a warm and friendly personality", were in love and wishing they could marry. As compliant Catholics, however, they faced the Church-imposed obstacle of Grahame's divorce from a young wife who had left their unsatisfactory marriage after three years. The dilemma seemed unresolvable, at least in the short term, when Grahame, promoting his major work, *The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, collapsed in Queensland and died in Sydney on 21st December 1976 at forty-seven. What Brenda recalls about the following grief-stricken period is her feeling of emptiness and the many blank pages in her diaries.

In a few passages, the author expresses critical views on the "double standards" evident in the comparison between the Church's harsh rules about remarriage for divorced people and the Vatican's benign or grudging (or both) blessing of marriages by priests and religious released from their celibacy obligation. Even Grahame, who was in her eyes less inclined to flexibility than herself about the Church's odd ways, can be quoted by her as saying on Catholic rules and regulations that "it seems a bit hard that marriage is the only thing that you don't get a second chance at". Brenda makes a valid but potentially debatable point with her reminder that "men of a mature age made their vows to God after years of preparation". Without ever adopting a strident tone, she several times in the book voices opposition, as on this matter, to all manifestations of clericalism in the Church.

Tentatively at first, after dealing as well as possible with the kind of setbacks and upsets that affect most if not all lives, Brenda gradually and successfully resumed and increased her varied involvements in the academic world and in writing for publication. Subject to panic attacks in the presence of an audience, she never wished to give formal lectures. Professor Bill Scott, the first of a few Department heads under whom she served at Monash, her chosen university, dispensed her from giving

lectures on her appointment. Towards the end of her long service, to accompany her many other honours, capped by an Order of Australia (AO), Monash awarded Brenda a prestigious doctorate of letters (LLD) in recognition of her exemplary teaching and literary record.

Bill Scott was one of a series of university colleagues, at Monash and on other campuses, who receive grateful tributes from Brenda Niall in these pages for the positive role they played in advancing what became, whether or not she named them as such, her twin careers as a highly regarded academic and a leading Australian writer.

I must apologise for committing the protocol breach of inserting in this review a few personal notes. With more space and less boasting I could have said more about the writer's books and the background she provides about reasons for selecting the varied and important subjects for her biographies and other writings, together with her adroit managing of the often intricate business of dealing with publishers, most of whom she found friendly and pleasant to communicate with, even when opinions differed on issues like what she saw as the too small size of print runs. Welcomes from readers, awards, good reviews and the need for reprints were all arguments on Brenda's side.

This detailed, revealing and interest-filled autobiography is a pleasure to read. It is highly recommended.

Back cover: *The silver trowel which was presented to Governor Macquarie to lay the first stone of old Saint Mary's in 1821. Within a couple of months, Macquarie had left Australia and returned to England, taking that trowel with him. 140 years later, in 1962, his descendants returned the trowel to Australia where it remains preserved in excellent condition in the State Library of NSW.*

The trowel was made and engraved by Samuel Clayton, a talented portrait artist, engraver, art teacher and silversmith. Unfortunately, as a young man, his talents were put to ill-use, since he was tried and convicted on charges of forgery in Dublin in 1815 and was sentenced to 7 years transportation.

Within a few weeks of arriving in the Colony, Samuel Clayton was advertising his services in The Sydney Gazette. Attributed to him are two silver trowels, both of which incorporate Masonic symbols in the engraving.

Image: The Saint Bede Studio based on the original in the State Library of NSW



The silver trowel which was presented to Governor Macquarie to lay the first stone of old Saint Mary's in 1821. See inside back cover for more detail.