

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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NEWSLETTER

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Australian Catholic Historical Society Inc. Sydney meetings and program for 2024

This information is correct as of 29th April 2024, but changes can occur.

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
19 May	St Patrick's Estate, Manly – then and now	Fr Brian Lucas , National Director: Catholic Mission Australia
<i>The Annual General Meeting of the Society (and elections) will immediately precede this May session, at 1:15pm</i>		
16 June	Sevenhill – a living archive	Dr Julie Thorpe , Independent scholar and historian
21 July	Crossing the Tiber: Australian Anglican clergy converts to Rome from the 1840s to the 2000s	Dr David Hilliard , Formerly: Associate Professor in History, Flinders University, Adelaide
18 August	The decline of Australian Catholic intellectual life	Gerard Windsor , Novelist, essayist and review Author of <i>The tempest-tossed Church</i>
15 September	Catholic-mindedness in the Catholic doctor: the Sydney Catholic Medical Guild of St Luke: 1933-1935	Dr Anne Thoeming , Independent Scholar and former member of the ACHS Council
20 October	The St John's College Act of 1857 -the legal antecedent and historical context	Kyle Oliver , Barrister at Law, Sydney
17 November	The Guild of St Pius X – its people and achievements in the liturgical; of Australia from the 40s to the 70s	Patrick Kirkwood , Formerly: Head of ABC RELIGIOUS Programs (Radio and TV and DIRECTOR, Catholic Audio Visual Centre, (Homebush, NSW))
7 December	Annual Mass and Christmas Lunch	St Mary's Church and Ron Dyer Centre, Ridge and Miller Streets, North Sydney

Location, time and contact: Sunday afternoons at 2.00pm (unless otherwise stated) in the Crypt Hall of St Patrick's, Church Hill [corner of Harrington and Grosvenor Streets. Admission is free and does not require membership of ACHS, but a donation is welcome. **Visit the ACHS website**

[<http://www.australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au>] for diverse information and features. **Members should note the earlier starting time on 19 May.**

NOTICE OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ACHS

1:15 PM ON SUNDAY, 19 MAY 2024

Crypt Hall of St Patrick's at Church Hill [Grosvenor Street], The Rocks.

- **The Agenda:**
- **Minutes of 2023 Annual General Meeting**
- **President's Report**
- **Treasurer's Report**
- **Election of Office Bearers for 2024**
- **Items of business and motions of which due notice had been given.**
- **Presentation of Life Memberships of ACHS**

Report of Sydney Meeting on 18th February 2024

Topic: The Woman of many names – Jane Hawthornthwaite

Speaker: Br Rory Higgins FSC

At the first gathering for 2024, the members of the Australian Catholic Historical Society and friends for the year heard an interesting presentation by De La Salle Brother Rory Higgins regarding the Benedictine nun, Mother Bernard, baptised Jane Hawthornthwaite, who died at Subiaco Convent, Parramatta, in 1882.

One of the points that Brother Rory wished to make because of his own experience and the story of Jane Hawthornthwaite, is that God is at work in our lives in ways that are appreciated more towards the end of our lives when we reflect upon what had happened to us and where we have “landed”.

Jane was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1850 into a Presbyterian middle-class family. She was given a good education with the result that she spoke French and Italian, and played the piano and harp. Because of the person that she was, and of her talents, she was employed as governess to the children, or grandchildren of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Kildare, Charles Dalrymple Lindsay. Her interest in religion led her to become acquainted with the former Episcopalian priest, Pierce Connolly.

Pierce and his wife, Cornelia, had read themselves into the Catholic Church when they were living in Mississippi. However, Pierce also believed that God was asking him to be not just a Catholic, but a Catholic priest. Cornelia was not supportive of his wishes. In time, she reluctantly agreed, knowing that what would be required for Pierce to be a priest was that he and she would pronounce avail of perpetual celibacy. Pierce did become a Catholic priest and was appointed assistant chaplain to John Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury. Jane became associated with Pierce and under his influence, she decided to become a Catholic. Upon telling her employer, she was dismissed. Overtime Jane discerned that God was asking her to be a nun. In the meantime, Cornelia had founded a religious congregation called the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. It was thought that Pierce encouraged Jane to join that congregation. For various reasons, Pierce decided to leave the priesthood. He asked Cornelia to return to him. She refused on the basis that she felt that she had found her vocation as a woman religious and that both he and she had taken a vow to God of perpetual celibacy. Pierce decided to take her to court and demanded conjugal rights. There was a court case. Pierce contacted Joan and asked her to spy on Cordelia. Jane informed Cornelia and the two of them decided it would be better for Jane to leave the congregation and join the French order the Religious of the Assumption. The court case continued. Cornelia lost the case and was ordered to return to her husband. There was an immediate appeal. Popular opinion in England was in support of Pierce. After 15 months, The Privy Council decided that Pierce would have to pay the cost

of the second appeal. He could not afford it with the result that Cornelia did not have to return to Pierce.

Jane was accepted as a novice of the Religious of the Assumption in Paris in June 1848. The following year, Jane's friend, the foundress St. Eugenie Milleret, decided to send Sisters to make a foundation in South Africa. The missionary group was led by the twenty-seven-year-old, Mother Gertrude, the former Countess Amelia de Henningsen.

The voyage on the “Oceanie” was full of surprises. The ship's crew mutinied, guns were fired over the heads of the nuns lying on the ship's deck and later a pirate ship appeared with the intention of making the passengers as slaves. The ship got lost in the Atlantic. Thankfully, the nuns eventually landed and boarded wagons for the interior. It is recorded that as they crossed the veldt they listened to the roar of the lions.

Either through a clash of personalities or proposed church changes to the Rule to suit the African environment, Jane decided not to be the founding principal of the school but to leave the religious congregation. Her brother was living in Australia and so she made her way there. Jane arrived in Sydney on the ship “Scotia” in January 1851 and two months later entered the Subiaco convent of the Benedictine nuns, near Parramatta.

Archbishop Polding desperately wanted to establish Catholic schools. The arrival of Jane was a Godsend. Now, he had a teacher. A few weeks after Jane entered the convent, advertisements appeared in the newspapers which announced that the nuns were opening a school for ladies. Sadly, Jane's health collapsed but the school continued for the next seventy years. Jane rose to fulfill important positions in the community, such a bursar. With her financial skills and the leadership of the Prioress, Mother Walburge Wallis, the community remained solvent. Each day she prayed for Pierce until her death in 1882. Pierce died as an Anglican priest in Florence the following year without any reconciliation.

After telling the story of Jane, Br. Rory put her conversion to Catholicism and her vocational journey as a nun in the context of the Catholic revival in France and the world-wide missionary expansion of the Church. France exploded with new religious orders. Jane's Religious of the Assumption are a case in point.

The third element in Brother's presentation his asking the members of the audience was the question posed by William and Ariel Durant if civilisation and religion rise and fall together? He concluded his talk with reference to Kenneth Clark's view of what is required for a civilisation to exist.

The book “The Women of Many Names, Jane Hawthornthwaite” can be purchased from the Benedictine Abbey, Jamberoo, NSW. A copy of the book is also located in the State Library in Sydney

Br Rory Higgins, March 2024

Report of Sydney Meeting on 17th March 2024

Topic: Our Catholic Heritage – St Patrick’s Cemetery

Speaker: Judith Dunn OAM

Judith Dunn began her presentation about the cemetery by showing a picture of the small stone Mortuary Chapel, the oldest mortuary chapel in the Commonwealth, built in 1844 as a memorial to Father Thomas Francis McCarthy, an Irish Capuchin friar who had served briefly in Parramatta.

Tall lemon scented and spotted gums dominated the photo, these planted by the Scouts and Rotary during a major clean up in 1952. Judith said that the cemetery, now no longer in use, was a place of peace. It is now, since 1975, the property of Parramatta Council and its heritage listed.

Judith spoke about the choice of land for the cemetery. There had been two areas in Parramatta surveyed and marked on a map as Catholic cemetery that she showed from the 1830s. One area next to the protestant cemetery was thought to be too valuable for the Catholics who were then mainly Irish convicts.

Judith showed many photos she had taken of interesting headstones. Some are very well designed and there are quite rare examples of some stonemasons’ fine work. Other headstones were of interest because of the person buried.

She told of John Lacy who for 25 years leased land to the council for a racetrack and he also ran the hotel positioned to catch the race crowd’s custom.

The grave of James and Mary Martin, parents of Chief Justice and Premier Sir James Martin who gave his name to Martin Plaza in Sydney.

Patrick Hayes, Inspector of Nuisances, who ran a brewery and an illegal distillery for which he was fined £1000, and yet he still became an alderman.

John Ryan, Inspector of Breweries, died of alcoholic poisoning.

Henry Stein, a German, one of several brought to Australia by John Macarthur to work in his vineyards. Other burials indicate that Chinese came early to Parramatta, as did people from Italy and numerous other parts of the world.

The ownership of the cemetery was taken over by the Council of Parramatta from the Church in 1975 after there were complaints about the poor maintenance of the area. Church authorities found the cost of upkeep was high. However, today Council has the same problem. Judith told of the many problems there with illustrations: long native grass overgrowing stonework, weeds rampant on graves, a collapsed vault leaving a 2.5metre deep hole, vagrants sleeping in the chapel, the dumping of rubbish and above all flooding. After a downpour Judith said there is a pipe that disgorges water that forms a small stream running through the cemetery. Water pools in the area about the mortuary chapel and causes some 20cm or more of water to cover the stone chapel floor. The chapel is a simple stone structure, and green moss is on all the stonework near the ground. There are five parish priests buried beneath the chapel floor.

Judith has been associated in various capacities with the cemetery for 40 years. She has now a group of fellow enthusiasts in Friends of St Patrick’s Cemetery. They hold working bees to rectify some of the problems and are keen to have new members. They are intending to apply for grants because the cemetery is a significant heritage for all.

Following the talk the president John Carmody thanked Judith Dunn for her St Patrick’s Day presentation.

Helen Scanlon, March 2024

Report of Sydney Meeting on 21st April 2024

Topic: Behind the scenes of Mother Teresa’s visit to Australia in 1981

Speaker: Dr John Whitehall

There were four visiting sisters from Mother Teresa’s order, Missionaries of Charity, who were warmly welcomed and invited to speak about their work. Sr Julianne told of the extent to the order. There are 14 houses in Australia and 757 Houses spread across all five continents. The sisters work with the poor, the dying and handicapped people. She told of the very many visits Mother Teresa made to Australia beginning in March 1969, usually to open a new house for the profession of new sisters. She spoke at several conferences too.

Dr John Whitehall began his talk by explaining how he had come to organise a conference at Macquarie University in 1980 on child pornography during the Year of the Child. This was successful so the following year, designated the Year of the Handicapped, John planned another conference looking at problems faced

by disabled young people. It was suggested to him that Mother Teresa be invited as a speaker. Mother Teresa arrived in Australia, visiting Perth, Melbourne, Darwin, and Sydney. She travelled with a group of sisters, a choir, who sang beautifully. John said this was remarkable since they were deaf.

At the conference she walked down the aisle and there was silence from the audience. When she spoke, the audience was held, not by what she said but John said it was more her manner and her presence... The conference was successful. The result was more community awareness of the problems faced by handicapped people.

John wanted a wider audience for Mother Teresa so a public meeting in Parramatta Park was organised. We heard about the logistics of constructing a platform on which she could stand and be seen. The builder was concerned least this collapse, but all was well.

In 2010 Dr Whitehall returned to Calcutta where he saw 159 volunteers who had been to mass and breakfasted and the divided into teams to work with the handicapped, the dying and the poor. .

John spoke of the way that Christianity is being minimised in Asia and Africa. Many missions working with disadvantaged people have been forced to leave, both Catholic and others who work in Christ's name.

Discussion followed. Michael Costigan explained that his wife Margaret was the first Australian to work in India with Mother Teresa in 1966 for a year. When Archbishop Knox came to Melbourne from being Nuncio in India, Teresa sent Margaret back to see him. When Mother Teresa came to Melbourne in 1969, Michael as a reporter on the "Advocate" interviewed Margaret and they met Mother Teresa at the airport. Michael and Margaret subsequently married. The

Costigan's met her again in 1973 at the Eucharistic Congress. Margaret also spoke briefly.

Anne Power thanked John and asked about government involvement following the Macquarie Conference. John said all his medical students at UWS now need to spend time at special schools to gain hands on experience.

Other members spoke of visiting Mother Teresa in India, or of spending time in a house run by Missionaries of Charity.

Fr Ed Campion said that when in India visiting his friend Jeremy Nelson in the 1950s he met Mother Teresa and worked with her. He noticed that she always shaved any man before he died and usually baptised them too. He met her again in 1973 at the Eucharistic Congress and remarked "I worked with you in the mid-1950s". Her reply was "When are you coming back?"

Helen Scanlon, April 2024

Melbourne Chapter – ACHS

On 4 March 2024, the Melbourne Chapter of the ACHS gathered at Catholic Theological College (University of Divinity) to hear a splendid paper by Dr Robert Carey. Robert shared with us his recently completed PhD thesis from Monash University *Freedom in the Catholic Press: A case study of the Melbourne Advocate in the 1960s*. In our current digital age saturated with 24/7 online content (of varying quality!), a previous generation of Catholics remember how their lives were shaped by picking up a copy of the *Melbourne Advocate* on Sunday at the parish piety stall. Dinner time discussions for families were sometimes based on the Sunday homily and the contents of the *Advocate*. Catholics from around Australia have similar memories of their diocesan weekly.

The pages of the *Advocate* in the 1960s were replete with news about the Second Vatican Council and 'the changes', especially the liturgy. Robert discussed how this springtime of Vatican II was part of the Church's 'liberal project' of openness to the world, internal renewal, and a certain freedom of expression. However, the pages of newspapers such as the *Advocate* also carried the wounds of the bitter Labor split, interventions at state and federal elections by clergy and clashing perspectives on how to fight Communism. Such intense debate was often played out in 'letters to the editor' columns and editorials. Robert's paper raised the perennial questions about editorial freedom, the legitimate place for laity to debate the burning questions of the day and the priest-editor's position given that the newspaper proprietor was often the diocesan bishop. As the 1960s progressed, the debates became more intense especially over the Vietnam War and *Humanae Vitae*. Vatican II recognized (and exalted) the place of laity like no previous council. The laity were demanding to be heard and that roar has become more acute given the recent Australian Plenary Council and the push by Pope Francis for a more synodal Church. As a former journalist and editor, himself, Robert shared the challenges of a Catholic publication needing to adhere to Catholic morals and teaching while at the same time maintaining good journalistic principles of informing its audience about news items from around the world.

In the 1960s, there were seven Catholic weeklies in Australia with a circulation of around 140,000. While the decline in readership naturally matched the decline in Sunday Mass attendance, Robert made note that of weeklies that survived (or were revived) they rarely contained letters to the editor, a concern expressed by the Catholic Press Association in 1963. While the role of the traditional Catholic press as a source of information has greatly declined, how does a more synodal Church promote voices from the peripheries as under Pope Francis it seeks to 'enlarge the space of the tent'?

Rev Dr Max Vodola, Melbourne Convenor

English Catholic Historical Society and the Australian Catholic Historical Society Zoom Event.

On 21 September at 5 pm AWST(Perth) via Zoom the English Catholic Historical Society and the Australian Catholic Historical Society will be co-hosting their first shared event on Zoom which will be a presentation by Fr Robert Cross, Director of Heritage for Geraldton Diocese, on Mons John Hawes, the priest-architect, who designed and built a series of churches throughout the mid-west of Western Australia. Sydney(7pm AEST (UTC +10)) London:(10am BST (UTC +1))

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