



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF AUSTRALIA

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Keep in touch

Happy birthday Monte Oliveto!

The Monte Oliveto Convent, Edgecliff turns 100

The Federation styled Monte Oliveto Convent in Edgecliff has something to celebrate. The Convent building, currently undergoing renovation, turned 100 years old in September earlier this year

The Sisters have been in the Woollahra Parish since 1879, when they were first invited by the Parish Priest to establish a foundation and take over the teaching of Catholic children from lay people. A permanent residence for the Sisters was found in 1880 in Albert St, opposite St Joseph's Church. The Sisters built a combined primary and high school on the site in 1909. The house sufficed for many years, but eventually repairs were found to be too costly, so a new convent was built on the same site in 1911. Monte Oliveto Convent was officially opened on September 8th, 1912, providing accommodation for 17 sisters. The Rectress was Mother Canice Bruton.

According to the Annals, the annual (and very successful) fetes were responsible for much of the upkeep of the premises over the years. Margaret Sheehan, who attended Monte Oliveto between 1918 and 1929, wrote to Sr Jose Thompson in 1988 about her time at the College:

"Once a year there would be a grand fete, and all the desks were removed from the grand hall for the men to erect the stalls. My mother would always be in charge of a stall. I don't know how long these fetes went on for, but it seemed to be days."



Monte Oliveto High School and Convent, 1912

In 1949, we learn from the annals that white ants practically destroyed the floors of the three rooms off the side verandah, with one room requiring a new floor; that the Beaumont Family erected the grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes in 1950 with the blessing ceremony overseen by the Franciscan Fathers; that Sr Moira O'Sullivan's mother donated her 1956 Holden car to the Convent in 1967; that in 1973 the chapel was modernised with a new altar; and that Sr M. Germanus McQuillan, who lived at the convent for some time while in the ministry of prison visitation, had the convent renovated with the help of both men and women prisoners in 1979.

Monte Oliveto College eventually closed in the early 1960s, due to lack of pupils in the parish. About this time, the Theresian Holiday house at Padstow had also been closed due to its obsolete condition and the high costs involved in the ongoing running of the home, so the Sisters allowed Monte Oliveto Convent to be used as a temporary shelter for children in crisis.

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Happy birthday Monte Oliveto!

From page 1

The Convent required extensive renovations to accommodate the childrens' needs, and it became known as the 'Theresian Emergency Centre' (pictured right). The Department of Social Security made a film at the Centre to highlight the plight of lone fathers in 1974.

In 1975, the Monte Oliveto playgroup started and became so popular it was necessary to conduct several sessions. There was a father's session on Saturday mornings.

A very successful after school care 'Fun-Time' program was established in 1977 with Sr Valerie Green in charge of the program. It included remedial lessons, physical exercise games, cooking and handiwork classes. A bus was purchased, and the young Marist Brothers doing university courses came to assist with the children over the holidays. Adult literacy classes were also conducted at the Convent by Sr Margaret Costigan in the early 1980s.



The Theresian
Emergency Centre
classroom

In January 1994, the Sisters sat on the sidewalk in their night attire and watched firefighters douse the flames in the roof of the historic convent. The Sisters had just been watching the devastating bushfires on the 7 o'clock news, whilst the fire was taking hold upstairs. The fire caused extensive damage to the upper floors, with the water drenching the lower floors. Much of Sr Moira O'Sullivan's historical research was lost.

So you can see it's a Convent that has stood the test of time – and, the Sisters residing there still continue to contribute to the life of the Catholic community. We wish Monte Oliveto a belated –

“Happy Birthday!”

Denise Corrigan, Archives Manager.



Srs Margaret Fitzgerald (left) and
Pauline Nicholson.

Passing the baton!

Sister Margaret Fitzgerald, the current Executive Director, will complete her ministry at the Sisters of Charity Outreach towards the end of December and will 'pass the baton' to Sister Pauline Nicholson.

Since the Sisters of Charity Outreach began in 1990, various Sisters have excelled in the leadership of this innovative work. The Services offered by Outreach are unique, as they have been established to fill the gaps in community welfare. The services include: Country Care Link, Court Support, Eastern Area Visit Program, Centre Services, Parent Support Program, Safe Haven and South West Visit Program. All the services are free of charge.

Sr Margaret, her staff members and approximately 200 volunteers have been providing these services for the most needy in our community. Well done!

Sr Margaret will now handover to Sr Pauline and on behalf of all the congregation, we thank her for the generosity and dedication she has shown over the years and wish her well as she takes some 'R&R'.

As Sr Pauline takes on the new role of Executive Director for Outreach, we extend our warm wishes and assurance of prayers.

Drumming in the West

with children from the back of Bourke

In June 2012 Sr Leone was invited by the Uniting Church Chaplain for Rural NSW, to accompany her, a tennis coach from Geelong, a mental health nurse and an early childhood development consultant, to visit the Enngonia and Weilmoringle Public Schools.

These schools are literally at the back of Bourke. Weilmoringle is 161 kilometres north west of Bourke, almost on the Queensland/NSW border. Sr Leone was invited to bring her drums to enable the children in these remote areas to have the experience of drumming.

The classes ranged from kindergarten and pre-school to Grade 6, the youngest drummer being 6 months old. At Weilmoringle, a school camp was held where children from properties in remotest NSW undergoing home schooling, were able to attend and socialise with other children of their own age.

The children had a wonderful time learning to play tennis and drumming to their heart's content. Sr Leone also learnt a few new songs from the children's repertoire. Dancing to the drum beat and telling bush stories on the drum were also favourites. Watching the children using the drum beat to imagine rain falling in the bush with the kangaroos and other bush animals scurrying to find shelter was a real treat for Sr Leone and the others watching. The visit was a real success with more planned for 2013.

Following this visit, St Vincent's Health Australia was able to contribute a substantial donation toward the cost of a school bus for the Enngonia public school. This school provides education for between 20 and 30 children, many of whom are from the Aboriginal community. The donation was added to that of the Uniting Church and the Sunshine Foundation. The 24 seat bus will enable the children to participate in many school excursions and benefit from meeting with children from other remote areas.



Enjoying Alexandra

by the Sisters at Deepdene

Alexandra is a little town in Victoria near Lake Eildon. In early November, Mary Gabrielle, Anna and Joan from Deepdene spent a few nights at Maybole Cottage. Trish could not quite face the two hour car journey this time. The cottage is walking-frame friendly and dog friendly, so Peppi, our dog, came too. Lake Eildon is an hour away from Deepdene and the high country is accessible through Mansfield.

The cottage is the original house on the 300 acre property and is simple, well kept with three bedrooms, living room, games room and simple, but more than adequate kitchen. Access to the Rail Trail is just down the road. This is a good walking track on a disused rail line. If you are energetic, it goes for over 100 kilometres.

We happened to be there for the Alexandra Show. When we saw that there was a category of 'Dog with the Biggest Ears', we entered Peppi, and she came home with a blue ribbon!! Another highlight was going to Bonnie Doon to see the house used in the film 'The Castle'.



Queen of the Alexandra Show – Peppi, not Mary Gabrielle!

We can really recommend Maybole Cottage.

The Dedication of our new Church: All Saints, Shellharbour

by Kerry Barrass rsc



Risen Christ, in the new Shellharbour Church.

On Wednesday 3rd October, we had a beautiful Mass to celebrate the Dedication of our new Church – All Saints, Shellharbour. The Dedication began with the telling of the history of the three Parishes: Shellharbour, Warilla and Oak Flats which are now combined into one Parish.

Mass began at 7pm with two Bishops – Peter Ingham and Peter Comensoli. Before becoming Bishop, Peter Comensoli had been an Assistant Priest at several Parishes in the Diocese, including Shellharbour. Approximately 25 other Priests from the Diocese were present, to support Father Bryan Jones PP.

Religious items from the former Parish Churches are now part of the new All Saints Church – the Corpus, relics, a candle and St Joseph's statue are from Sacred Heart Church, Warilla. Our Lady's statue and two candle sticks are from the Oak Flats

Church Hall and two more candle sticks came from Stella Maris Church. The relics for the altar were from the former Convent of the Sisters of Charity and the Stella Maris Church.

The Mass was very meaningful and the Homilies of both Bishop Peter Ingham and Father Bryan urged the people to work together to bring a new community into being.

In the Dedication ceremony, the beauty of the Church itself, Baptismal Font, the rising Christ, Altar and Lectern were highlighted during the blessing. There is also a Bell which is rung at 6pm for the Angelus and a huge cross in the front of the Church which lights up at night.

I thank God I am here to be part of this beautiful Church. Amen!

Story of a bushranger

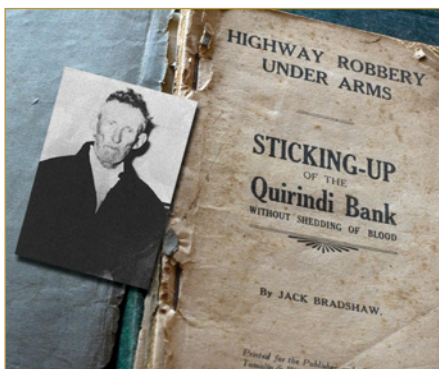
by Phillippine Humphreys rsc

When I read the last edition of KIT, there was mention of the Darlinghurst Prison, which prompted me to send in a story about my childhood association with a Bushranger, Jack Bradshaw.

Jack was born in Dublin in 1846 and came to Victoria in 1860 when he was fourteen, to be with his uncle. However, his uncle died before Jack arrived.

He found work at Wangaratta as a farm hand and shearer. He became friendly with Daniel Morgan, the bushranger and became a bushranger himself. He was captured after holding up the Quirindi Bank and spent years in prison. He was released but following more misdemeanours, he returned to prison.

While in prison, Jack educated himself and found that he could earn a living from writing and lecturing about his exploits. He wrote four books. His first book *Highway Robbery Under Arms* was an account of the Quirindi robbery. He was very proud of this book as there was no bloodshed in that robbery.



Inside cover of book *Highway Robbery Under Arms*, and a portrait of Jack.

In 1928, Jack came to live as a boarder in my grandmother's boarding house. He was the gentlest old man you could ever meet by then. He told lots of interesting stories and taught me many Irish songs. He stayed with us until 1932 when my grandmother arranged for him to go to The Little Sisters of the Poor in Randwick and when we visited, he would often tell me that I reminded him of his little daughter. Jack died in 1937 and was buried at Rookwood.

About twenty years ago, some historians, interested in bushrangers, came to see me, to find out more information about Jack. I told them there was no tombstone on his grave and they arranged with W.N. Bull Funeral Directors to erect a detailed tombstone for Jack, which they took me to see.

When I hear mention of 'Bushrangers', I do not think of 'gangsters' or 'ruffians'. I have known one who was gentle and kindly – enjoy reading a little of his life!

Tributes to the Sisters of Charity



Recently, two tributes to the Sisters of Charity were received from different sources and they are shared here:

For Sr Maria Cunningham from the Catholic Health Australia Chairman and CEO's Report:

"It is appropriate in this report to acknowledge that the association lost one of the true giants of the Catholic health and aged care family with the passing of Sr Maria Cunningham in March. Her passing underlined how important it was for us to have instituted the Sr Maria Cunningham Lifetime Achievement Award, recognising her decades of outstanding work in the area of Catholic health and aged care. The award will be an ongoing reminder of Sr Maria's leadership and vision as she worked to improve the lives of so many people."

An acknowledgement of the Sisters of Charity in the Obituary notice of Mr Tony Sallmann, by Tony's family:

".....Tony's second and third careers overlapped to some degree. In 1968, he was invited by the Sisters of Charity to join the Advisory Council of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne; he remained involved for 25 years, the last five as Chairman of the Board of Directors – the only non-Catholic on the council. Over time, he was also Chairman of the Public Hospital Re-building Committee and the St Vincent's Medical Research Institute. During the latter part of St Vincent's years, he converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism; his wife Ann was Catholic which, combined with his enormous regard for the Sisters of Charity, drove his decision. However, he remained deeply ecumenical in his religious thinking and practices; he saw the possible unification of the various Christian churches as a highly desirable and achievable goal."

We thank Catholic Health Australia and Tony Sallman's family.

The Sisters of Charity

Remote and Rural Group

by Sr Maree Henderson rsc

The Sisters of Charity Remote and Rural Group recently had a morning tea organised by Sister St Jude Doyle rsc, to present the volunteers to Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales and Patron of the Remote and Rural Group.

The day began with a short Liturgy in St Vincent's Chapel, prepared by Sr Laureen Dixon rsc and followed by morning tea in the College dining room. All Volunteers were presented to the Governor, who thanked them and all those associated with them, for the dedicated service to the needy rural families of New South Wales. This message included thanks to all the Remote and Rural volunteers living in or near country towns who made a personal contact in the Group's name, often over a cup of tea.

Also present were significant persons from the R&R Group's beginnings and beyond. These included Ms Reba Meagher, CEO of the Sisters of Charity Foundation from whom the R&R Group received its third grant, and Sister Elizabeth Dodds rsc, the Congregational Leader in 2008, who declared the Group a Congregational Apostolate, and Sister Annette Cunliffe rsc, the current Congregational Leader.

The Treasurer, Sister Maree Henderson rsc, spoke of the importance of the pastoral work of many rural volunteers, backed as they were, by the many and varied forms of support from those situated in Sydney.



1-2 The Liturgy in St Vincent's Chapel.

3 A chat after Morning Tea with Sr St Jude.

4 Governor Marie Bashir leaves the Liturgy with Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc.

Retreat Day

Sydney RSC Companions

by Jean Marie Brennan rsc

On Saturday, 20th October the Sydney RSC Companions gathered in the Flinders Village Community Centre at Castle Hill for a retreat/reflection day. Two of our companions live in the Village which is part of the larger Anglican Retirement Villages. The community centre proved to be an ideal place for our day together. The grounds proved wonderful for reflection and gentle meandering – water features, shady nooks, colourful flowers and even families of ducks!

The day began with a morning tea of slices and cakes provided by two of our best cooks.



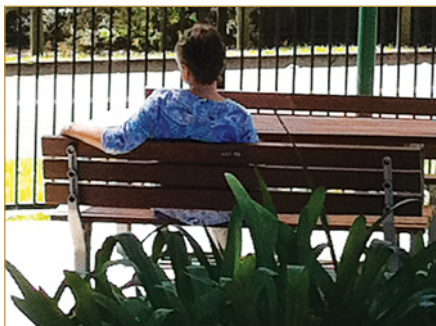
Companions, Edith, Merrill, Rena, Pat and John.

The theme for the day was Mark's Gospel and the Year of Grace. Libbey Byrne rsc led us in prayer and reflection, providing further input on the Gospel of Mark, our theme for the year.

Over the course of the day, we looked at various depictions of the 'face of Christ' beginning with some traditional artists and finishing with a contemporary song and photographs of the many 'faces of Christ' we find around us on the streets.



Companions, John, Margaret, Jean, Marina.



Margaret enjoys the beautiful grounds.

There was a good balance of time between input sessions, reflection time in the beautiful grounds, walking a 'scripture path' and time to talk while eating lunch. The day was stimulating and inspiring and a fitting conclusion to our study of Mark's Gospel this year.

We are looking forward to our last Liverpool meeting for the year on 18th November and eager to see what spiritual treasures await us in 2013.

Postscript

One of our Companions, John Hickey – an All Saints Liverpool Parishioner – was a recipient of the 2012 Order of Liverpool Award. This notice was published in the Parish Bulletin:

"...John was presented with the Award by the Mayor of Liverpool on the anniversary of the founding of Liverpool 7th November 1820. Within our Parish, John is an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, a catechist, a warden, a counter and is a member of the RCIA, the Liturgy Committee and the Caring Group. He has also worked with the Sisters of Charity Court Support and has been involved for many years with Antioch. Thank you John for the witness you give to Christ's commandments to love God and love your neighbour."

*Congratulations John!
We are proud of you!*

Banners

to inspire (Part 1)!

by Denise Corrigan, Archives Manager

Last month, Sr Christine Henry showed to the 175th Anniversary Committee meeting an album of photographs of 14 banners, hand made by the Sisters of Charity, that were hung in St Mary's Cathedral for the Sisters' Sesqui-Centenary celebrations in 1988. It spurred the Committee's interest.

What happened to the banners?



Creating the *Women of Love* banner.

The Archives found eight of the 14 banners listed in the Textile Collection. What would we uncover after 25 years in storage? We found all eight remarkably well-preserved, vibrantly coloured banners!

All roads of enquiry led to Sr Deirdre Hickey!



Rolling the textiles.

In the next edition of KIT, our queries will be answered!

Words of remembrance

Sr Jean Weatherley

Excerpts from the Words of Remembrance from Sr Jeannie Johnston and Jan Henderson, her niece.



Sr Jean was born on 3rd November 1913 at Hendon, a small town on the Darling Downs about 15 kilometres south west of Allora. She was very proud of her birth place and used to say "I grew up with the richest black soil on the Darling Downs – Allora!" She was the fourth of seven children of Daniel and Josephine Weatherley.

At the time of her death, she was in her 99th year of age and the Senior sister in the congregation. Sr Jeannie said –

"I can see the twinkle in her eye and the knowing grin as I announce this however, I'm not too sure that she would appreciate her exact age being known!"

Jean was a person who was very busy and active. She loved life to the full and was a much loved member of the congregation.

After completing her schooling in Toowoomba, Jean became a Student Teacher and then entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate at Potts Point. It is interesting to note, that next year, 2013, we would have celebrated her 80th Anniversary of Religious Profession.

Jean's first appointment as a teacher was to St Vincent's College Potts Point. She taught in other schools – Lewisham, Ashgrove, Liverpool, Cabramatta and Katoomba. Her niece, Jan, remembers the times her Mum and Dad would pack their six children in the family car to travel up the windy roads to visit her Aunt Jean at Katoomba. They have photos of Katoomba days – Jean in her full length black habit, meticulously dressed, everything 'just right'! An enduring memory the family had of Jean was the size of her feet! She was sooooo proud of her dainty 4½ inch size shoes!

In 1979, Jean returned to Queensland to be part of the Mt Olivet Community with a ministry in the community. Some named her 'Home Maker' as she took great care in looking after all the aspects of the house.

Jan said that the best words to describe her aunt were that she was "dedicated and committed – to her profession as a nun and as a teacher, and as part of the various communities to which she belonged. She was dedicated to her family – her brother and sisters, and to her multitude of nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews." She loved the occasions when she was able to attend family 'get-togethers'.

The final years of Jean's life shine as the greatest example of her deep faith and acceptance of the will of God. At the end times of her life, this bustling bee of energy and vitality became still as she waited for her God to call her.

May she rest in peace.



Sr Ellen O'Carrigan (seated right) shares hospitality with Sr Moira O'Sullivan and her brother, Fr Michael.

Bexley holiday house

by Sr Moira O'Sullivan rsc

While the convent at Bexley has been recommended for Sisters having Respite Care, it has another side to it. The situation at Bexley is ideal for someone with reduced mobility and as a place for senior holidays. Many Sisters find travelling long distances too difficult, and do not want to be away from their Sydney families and contacts, so there is the advantage of closeness for Sisters living in Sydney.

The many involved in Calvary Hospital rehabilitation services who at times come here (physiotherapist, occupational therapists, nurse) all comment on how well the place is set up with ramps and bars. Even the clothesline is easy to get to and use. The physio envies the size of the laundry, while the kitchen (with well-thought-out equipment) is spacious. There are four bedrooms, all on one level, since it is a one-storey house. The chapel is quiet, and there are inside and outside places to sit and enjoy the sunshine, while surrounding streets are flat and well-paved, for those who enjoy strolling. The church is only a short walk, but Ellen, the perfect hostess, drives visitors there if there is rain or any other difficulty.

Think about it next time
you need a change!

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